



FUNDAMENTAL KNOWLEDGE OF BUDDHISM

GB 101 E



Fundamental Knowledge of Buddhism

GB 101E

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Foreword

The course Fundamental Knowledge of Buddhism GB 101E is the first course taken by the candidate of the Bachelor of Buddhism Program at DOU. In this course, the student will learn about the Triple Gem which is the core of Buddhism and humanity's highest refuge.

This course not only gives the student an overview of all the teachings contained in Buddhism but also makes it possible for the student to begin applying these teachings in his daily life. Practicing these teachings on a daily basis will benefit the student in this and future existences. Moreover, the material in this course will allow the student to seek the highest benefit of attaining Phra Dhammakaya and the eventual removal of defilements.

This course also provides the student with the foundation for the rest of the courses contained in the program, thereby facilitating the student's pursuit of his Bachelor Degree here at DOU.

The preparation of this course material has been a team effort. It is possible that even after many rounds of editing and cross-editing, the material may still contain mistakes. The Committee hopes that it will receive comments and feedback which will allow it to further improve upon this course material.

The Committee

January B.E. 2553

Course Syllabus

1. Description of the Course Material

GB 101E Fundamental Knowledge of Buddhism

This course material is about the Triple Gem which is the core of Buddhism. It also provides an overview of the Lord Buddha's Teachings. The course includes such topics as what Buddhism is; why must we learn about Buddhism; how to learn about Buddhism; Upasakas and Upasikas, etc. This course provides the fundamental knowledge of Buddhism necessary for the rest of the courses in the Bachelor of Buddhism Program here at DOU.

2. Course Objectives

1. To enable the student to gain an overview of Buddhism.
2. To enable the student to know about the Triple Gem, the core of Buddhism.
3. To enable the student to lay down the groundwork for his pursuit of the Bachelor of Buddhism Program here at DOU.
4. To enable the student to see the value of in-depth learning about Buddhism and how he can apply what he has learnt to his daily life.
5. To enable the student to contribute to the cause of Buddhism.

3. Topics Covered in the Course

Chapter 1	Introduction
Chapter 2	General Knowledge of Buddhism
Chapter 3	The Nature of Life According to Buddhism
Chapter 4	The Triple Gem: The Core of Buddhism
Chapter 5	The Lord Buddha
Chapter 6	The Dhamma: The Lord Buddha's Teachings
Chapter 7	The Sangha: The Lord Buddha's Disciples
Chapter 8	Upasakas and Upasikas: Lay Devotees Who Sit Near the Triple Gem
Chapter 9	The Global Center of Buddhism
Chapter 10	Conclusion

Method of Study

1. Preparation for Self-Study

In order to achieve the objectives of the course, the student should follow the steps for studying each chapter as follows.

- a. Spend an hour each day on the course material and plan to finish each chapter within one to two weeks.
- b. Begin each lesson with the pre-test to evaluate the student's prior knowledge of the subject material. Complete the exercises provided in each chapter. At the end of the chapter, the student should assess his comprehension of the material covered in the chapter by completing the test.
- c. Spend time on additional information especially through long-distance learning via satellite.

2. Self-Evaluation before and after Each Chapter

The student should complete the pre-test before beginning each chapter in order to gauge his knowledge of the subject material. The student should also complete the test at the end of each chapter. The student will then know how well he has learnt the subject matter, and whether he is ready to proceed to the next chapter. He should score at least 80%. Self-evaluation will only be effective if it is carried out honestly.

3. The Text

Before beginning each chapter, the student should go over the layout of the chapter in terms of its topics, concepts, and objectives before proceeding with the detailed study. After having finished reading the entire chapter, the student should write down its main points and complete the exercises provided at the end of each chapter. The exercises will help the student to evaluate how well he comprehends the material covered and how he can apply what he has learnt to his daily life. Therefore, the student should not wait until the last minute to do the exercises all at once because such practice is missing the point.

4. Long-Distance Learning via Satellite and Other Media

The Foundation for the Study of the Dhamma for the Environment broadcasts its programs via satellite 24 hours a day. Each program aims to give the general public practical information which helps promote morality. There are different programs that can help the student with this course such as Buddhist Words, the Law of Kamma, Meditation for Beginners, Luang Por's Answers, Life in the Round of Rebirth, Dhamma for the People, etc. Additional learning can be obtained through E-learning which is provided by DOU. For more detail of these media, please contact DOU's coordination center.

5. Attending the Inner Dreams Kindergarten

The student can learn about how to apply the Lord Buddha's Teachings to his daily life through real life examples by attending the Inner Dreams Kindergarten which is broadcasted via satellite every Monday to Saturday from 7 p.m. to 9.30 p.m. (Thai time). There are also reruns of the program as posted in the broadcasting schedule. The student can request the broadcasting schedule from the DOU Coordination Center.

6. Exam

The student will be evaluated for his theoretical and practical knowledge of this course as follows.

The theoretical part consists of 100 multiple-choice questions. (70 points).

The practical part consists of the completion of the exercises. (30 points).

Chapter 1

Introduction

Chapter 1

Introduction

Overview of the course Fundamental Knowledge of Buddhism

Concepts

Fundamental Knowledge of Buddhism GB 101E is the first course in the Bachelor of Buddhism Program here at DOU. This course deals with the fact that the Triple Gem is the core of Buddhism. The course is designed to give the student an overview of all of the teachings contained in Buddhism as well as helping the student to apply what he has learnt to his daily life. This course also provides the foundation necessary for other courses in the program.

Objectives

The course GB 101E aims to provide the student with an overview of the Fundamental Knowledge of Buddhism.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Fundamental Knowledge of Buddhism GB 101E provides information about the Triple Gem which is the core of Buddhism and humanity's highest refuge. In this course, the student will gain an overview of all of the teachings contained in Buddhism such that he can apply what he has learnt to his daily life correctly and accordingly (not too taut, not too lax, and in an adequate amount). The theoretical and practical knowledge gained from the course can benefit the student in this and future existences. Most importantly, he will be motivated to seek the ultimate benefit of attaining Phra Dhammakaya and the subsequent removal of all defilements.

This course provides the foundation necessary for the pursuit of other courses in the program. Therefore, the knowledge gained from this course will facilitate the student's understanding of the rest of the courses.

Contents of this course have been garnered from the Tripitaka, the Commentary, the Dhamma lectures of the Most Venerable Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro), the former Abbot of Wat Paknam, the Dhamma lectures of the Most Venerable Phrarajbhavanavisudh, the Abbot of Wat Phra Dhammakaya, the Dhamma lectures of the Most Venerable Phrabhavanaviriyakhun, the Vice-Abbot of Wat Phra Dhammakaya, etc. The connection between Buddhадham in the Tripitaka and the Dhamma lectures of the former Abbot of Wat Paknam regarding the Triple Gem is also presented in this course.

Presentation of the material in certain cases is by way of analogy; in other cases comparison is made with the teachings of other religions and the sciences; in yet other cases comparison with and relevance to current events and daily life are made.

The use of analogy and comparison is the Lord Buddha's way of teaching the Dhamma because the Dhamma is highly profound and can be penetrated only through meditation practice. Therefore, to enable the general public to understand the Dhamma to a certain level, analogy and comparison needed to be used. However, the use of comparison in this course is merely to help clarify certain points.

It should be noted that the use of comparison has given rise to much of the secular knowledge in different areas. And the use of comparison is the basis of Einstein's Relativity Theory which has revolutionized the entire scientific world.

We would not know if we are tall or short if we have no one else to compare our self to. If we were born in a forest and never had any opportunity to meet other people, we would be deprived of much knowledge and the thought that we are tall, short, beautiful or ugly would have never entered our mind. Being the only person in our world means that we never have the opportunity to see anyone else that is different from us. As a result, we are robbed of the very instrument which allows us to know more about our self.

When we look at our self in the mirror, we may think that we look fine but when someone else comes to stand behind us, our thinking may change. We may feel that we are actually better looking than we first thought. We may feel indifferent. Or we may feel worse. This occurs as a result of the fact that there are now two people in the mirror and naturally a comparison can be made. In point of fact, our looks remain the same but our attitude about our looks changes in that we are better-, equal, or worse-looking than the other person.

This is the same with learning about Buddhism. If we do not compare it with other religious teachings, we will not be able to understand or truly appreciate it. We can truly appreciate the value of Buddhadham only when we can compare it with the teachings of other religions.

The use of comparison and connection to current events will allow the student to appreciate how Buddhadham concerns all of us and how it has direct relevance to our daily life.

This course material is divided into eight chapters from Chapters 2 to 9. Chapter 2 gives the student a broad picture of Buddhism under such topics as what is Buddhism, why must we learn about Buddhism, how to learn about Buddhism, etc.

Chapter 3 is about the nature of life according to Buddhism. It gives information about the human body, the human mind, and the round of rebirth. Chapter 4 is about how the Triple Gem is humanity's highest refuge and how it can lead us out of suffering.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 give more in-depth information about the Triple Gem which includes the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma or the Lord Buddha's Teachings, and the Sangha or the Lord Buddha's disciples.

Chapter 8 is about Upasakas and Upasikas. They are lay devotees who sit near the Triple Gem. They are the supporters of Buddhism.

Chapter 9 is about the global center of Buddhism, how the global center of Buddhism is the Buddhist way of creating unity among the Buddhist Communities, and how the global center of Buddhism has made it possible for Buddhism to flourish for more than 2,500 years.



Assignments:

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

Chapter 2

General Knowledge of Buddhism

Chapter 2

General Knowledge of Buddhism

General Knowledge of Buddhism

2.1 The Basis of Human Life

2.2 What Is Buddhism?

2.3 Why Must We Learn about Buddhism?

2.3.1 Learning about the Reality of Life and the Correct Way to Live Our Life

2.3.2 Learning about How We Can Benefit Our Self as well as Our Fellow Beings

2.4 The History of Buddhism

2.5 Buddhism's Special Characteristics

2.5.1 Buddhism Is the Religion of Insight

2.5.2 Knowledge about All Living Beings

2.5.3 Our Life Is Determined by Our Own Deeds and Not by a Superior Being

2.5.4 The Absence of Malice, Violence, and Wars.

2.6 How to Study Buddhism

2.6.1 Sappurisanseva: Keep the Company of the Righteous

2.6.2 Saddhamsavana: Pay Attention to the Teachings of the Righteous

2.6.3 Yonisomanasikara: Develop Analytical Reflection

2.6.4 Dhammanudhammapatipatti: Practice in Perfect Conformity to the Doctrine

Concepts

1. What every human being has in common is the fact that we are born in a state of ignorance. We tend to live our life by following the ways of our parents and grandparents without questioning whether their ways are correct or not. It is only when we find that some of our actions and the actions of other people bring about all kinds of problems, pain, and fear that we begin to feel inadequate and with the inadequacy comes the need for some sort of knowledge. As opposed to the state of ignorance all of us are born into, the Triple Gem is the source of true knowledge which can help us put an end to suffering.
2. Buddhism is synonymous with the Lord Buddha's Teachings. Buddhism teaches the fact that the Triple Gem is our refuge because it can lead us out of suffering. Buddhism teaches about "Noble Truths" and the correct way to live our life such that we can benefit not only our self but our fellow beings as well.
3. We must learn about Buddhism because Buddhism teaches about the reality of life.
4. Buddhism happened as a result of Prince Siddhattha's Self-Enlightenment over 2,500 years ago. The happening of Buddhism is a historic event for India and the world because it has brought about the greatest change in the beliefs and cultures of the people in the Indian society. Buddhism has been responsible for the peace and happiness in the lives of individuals who practice according to the Lord Buddha's Teachings throughout the course of its history and up until the present days.
5. Buddhism possesses many special characteristics. For example, it is the religion of insight. It contains knowledge about all living beings. It teaches the fact that our life is determined by our own deeds and not by a superior being. It teaches about peace and goodwill, etc.
6. We can learn about Buddhism by following the principle of Vuddhidham. Vuddhidham means finding a good teacher, listening attentively to his teachings, reflecting on the teachings, and practicing them.

Objectives

The material covered in this chapter will give the student a good idea about Buddhism. The topics included in this chapter are what is Buddhism, why must we learn about Buddhism, the history of Buddhism, Buddhism's special characteristics, and how to learn about Buddhism.

Chapter 2

General Knowledge of Buddhism

2.1 The Basis of Human Life

Our life and most people's lives are the same in that from the day that we were born, we have been surrounded by our parents and relatives. Our parents fed us and took care of us. They taught us to drink and eat. They taught us to crawl, walk, talk, etc. And we gradually learnt to do everything that children of our age could do.

At a certain age our parents sent us to school. Our teachers taught us to read and write and to complete all of the courses required at different levels of education until we could complete our education and looked for work. Next, we looked for a spouse and soon enough we had children of our own and we looked after our children and taught them in the same way that our parents had taught us. As time passed, our parents aged and died. Soon enough we too must die and so must our children.

Throughout our lifetime, each of us has to encounter a myriad of experiences both good and bad which cause us to feel joyful, sad, happy, unhappy, stressed, frightened, confused, etc. At times when we feel very stressed out, very fearful, very unhappy, it is natural that we want to look for some sort of refuge outside of our self. Some find it in deities, wood nymphs, ghosts. Some worship strange phenomena like animals with two heads, an ox with five legs, strange looking trees, etc. Some find refuge in religion. We all struggle through life any way we can until the day we die and this is the state of life in our chaotic world today.

The following are some observations made by certain individuals about human life:

This is what the first individual has to say, "We all do things in the same way that others do. We rush around doing things without ever pausing to reflect on anything. We struggle to outdo each other in school, at work, in the amount of money we earn. Once we make enough money then it is time to get married and have children. No one gives aging, sickness, or death any thought. No one realizes that death can come to us any time. No one stops to think that there may be things that are more important in life than earning a living, having a family, having a good time, etc. Perhaps we need to ask our self if the things that we do in life can really make us happy and in the way that we dream about".¹

¹ Thitinart Na Pattaloong. **Kem Tid Cheewit**, B.E. 2530, p. 30-31

Another individual has this to say, “I’ve often felt that there is this thing that is constantly making trouble for everyone. It’s as though there is some entity which fears that there may be peace on earth. Therefore, it is always creating big and small problems in terms of economy, difficulty in making a living, love, greed, anger, ignorance, birth, aging, sickness, death, etc. If it’s not one thing, then it’s another. Problems big and small seem to be constantly recycling in our life and at times problems occur all at once to leave us in complete ruin.

Every human being on earth, regardless of color, race, language, and other differences seems to be swimming around in this sea of problems in a stupor. People who once loved each other can no longer keep their love intact. And a new love is sought but the new love turns out to be an illusion not unlike a dog looking at the reflection of a piece of meat in the water.

Some have gained fame but they desire bigger successes. Some harbor a grudge against someone for years and their mind turns gloomy when that particular someone’s name is mentioned. Some want things that they cannot afford. Others spend money on things whether they suit them or not until they have piles and piles of things to look at.

It seems odd that whenever problems appear, the ability to solve them seems to evaporate. Come to think of it, all of us face pretty much the same problems like the same movie with the same plot; the only things that change are the actor, the costume, and the place. As long as earth is still heated by the Sun, suffering is like the sun rays that burn us because we can’t stay in the shade all the time.”²

Knowers of the past taught that the basis of human life is the same for everyone in that we are born with Avijja, which means ignorance. We don’t know why we are born or what the objective of life is. All of us learn to do things the way that our parents and their parents have always done without knowing whether these things are right or wrong. We may question certain things only after what we or other people did becomes a problem. Sometimes things just happen to us and to our loved ones and we wonder why they must happen at all. Major problems in our life cause us pain and we become frightened. As a result, we feel the need to search for a refuge. We want to know if anything can help us escape from the problems, fear, and pain that are confronting us.

Eventually, we realize that no other living beings, be they some kinds of strange animals, powerful deities or renowned fortune tellers can really help us escape from suffering. And the next question we may have is: what then can be our true refuge?

Knowers of the past taught that the Triple Gem is humanity’s true refuge because it can lead us out of fear and pain. The Triple Gem is the core of Buddhism. The Triple Gem can be compared to a huge tree which can protect us from the sun. However, Buddhism never teaches blind faith. On the contrary, Buddhism teaches us to put its

² Udom Tairpanit. **Kem Tid Cheewit**, B.E. 2530, p. 18-19

teachings to the test by studying them and practicing them: Ehipassiko - It means come and prove it to yourself.

2.2 What Is Buddhism?

Buddhism means the teachings of the Lord Buddha. The Lord Buddha's enlightened knowledge is gained through the process of Self-Enlightenment. The core of His teachings has to do with the Triple Gem where the First Gem is the Lord Buddha, the Second Gem is the Dhamma or the Lord Buddha's Teachings, and the Third Gem is the Sangha or the Lord Buddha's disciples.

There are two types of Triple Gem. The first type is the Internal Triple Gem which dwells inside the body of every human being. The Internal Triple Gem is our highest refuge because it can help us to escape from suffering. The second type is the External Triple Gem, which serves to lead us to the attainment of the Internal Triple Gem. The External Triple Gem includes the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma or the Lord Buddha's teachings, and the Sangha or the Lord Buddha's disciples.

Buddhism is the Lord Buddha's Teachings and the Lord Buddha teaches that the Triple Gem is our highest refuge because it can lead us out of suffering. The Lord Buddha's Teachings or the Dhamma is the knowledge which flows out of the Internal Triple Gem. The Dhamma is about "Noble Truths" which have to do with the reality of life and the correct way to live life for our own benefits and the benefits of humanity as a whole.

The term Buddhism appeared for the first time on the day that the Lord Buddha gave the Dhamma lecture "Ovadapatimokha" to 1,250 Arahats. This important event took place on the day that the Arahats came together to see the Lord Buddha without any prior arrangement. This day was the 15th day of the 3rd waxing moon which is also known as Magha Puja Day. The giving of this particular Dhamma lecture is considered to be the Buddha-Tradition in that every Lord Buddha to date has given it. Part of the lecture includes the following:

<i>Sabbapapassa Akarāṇaṇ</i>	<i>Commit no misdeeds</i>
<i>Kusalassupāsāpāda</i>	<i>Perform only wholesome deeds</i>
<i>Sacittapariyodāpanaṇ</i>	<i>Make your mind clear and bright</i>
<i>Etāṇ buddhana sasaṇaṇ</i>	<i>This is what every Lord Buddha teaches.</i> ³

³ *Suttantapiṭaka Dīgha-nikāya Mahāvagga*. Siamrath Pali Language, vol. 10, no. 54, p. 57

The words “**buddhana sasanan**” mean Buddhism.

The reason we say that the core of the Lord Buddha’s Teachings has to do with the Triple Gem comes from the reference found in the “Mahāparinibbana Sutta”, which is the Lord Buddha’s final advice to His disciples.

“Behold monks, should any one of you have any doubt or question about the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha, the Path or any other practices, let you ask it now so that you won’t have to regret later that you didn’t take the opportunity to ask me your question while I am still here with you.”

At these words, all the monks remained silent. Even after the question was repeated the second and the third time, they still remained silent. They remained silent because all of the venerable monks present had already attained Ariyahood.⁴

Although the Lord Buddha had given Dhamma lectures for a total of 45 years but before He attained Complete Nibbana, He wished to give His disciples one last opportunity to ask any question that they might have about the Dhamma.

To summarize, the core of the Lord Buddha’s Teachings has to do with the Triple Gem, which includes the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. The student will learn more on this subject in chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7. In chapter 3, the student will learn about the nature of life according to Buddhism.

⁴ *Suttantapiṭaka Dīgha-nikāya Mahāvagga. Māhāparinibbāna Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 13, no. 142, p. 321

2.3 Why Must We Learn about Buddhism?

There are at least two reasons for learning about Buddhism:

1. We learn about Buddhism in order to learn about the reality of life and how to live our life correctly.
2. We learn about Buddhism in order to benefit our self and our fellow beings.

2.3.1 Learning about the Reality of Life and the Correct Way to Live Our Life

Buddhism can provide answers to such questions as why are we born, what is our life's objective, is there a hell, is there a heaven, what can we do to be reborn in heaven, what makes us different from each other, what makes animals different from each other, why are some people born wealthy while others are born desperately poor, why are some people good-looking while others are homely, why are some smart and hard-working people still poor, what can we do to meet with happiness and success, what can we do in order to be wealthy, etc.

The answers to these questions and more have been given by Buddhism for more than 2,500 years already and these answers have been preserved in the Tripitaka. Unfortunately, these precious texts lie forgotten in libraries like a precious gold mountain that nobody pays any attention to. In some cases, people take to worshipping these texts as being sacred objects but that is not what the Lord Buddha has in mind. At the same time that these precious texts are being ignored, other books written by ordinary individuals are gaining increasing popularity. It is then not surprising that humanity should be plagued by suffering, which has its root cause in defilements.

Some people may say that they do not have enough time already as it is with all the work that they have to do each day, how can they possibly find the time to learn about Buddhism?

Most people in the world manage their time by listing the things that they must do in the order of importance. But if we still do not know the truth about our life, how will we know what should be the top priority in our life? We may think that spending most of our time accumulating material wealth for our self and our family is the correct use of our time. We may at times wonder why there are still so many poor people in the world in spite of the fact that they may be working very hard. Can it be that they are just unlucky? But then what makes some people unlucky and others lucky?

Normally before we buy any piece of equipment we have to learn something about it first in order to see whether or not it can serve our purpose. And yet, when it comes to our life, why is it that most of us do not bother to learn anything about it? It is only logical that we should be interested in learning about what life is and what should be the top priority in our life. Nowadays earning a living appears to be the top priority in most people's life so much so that the true objective of life has been overlooked altogether. Our treatment of life is not unlike driving a car without any knowledge of how to drive it. The result is apt to be disastrous.

What if hell and heaven do exist and should you die now, how do you think you would fare? How can you be confident of spending your hereafter in heaven when in all of your life you have never learnt anything about how to get there? Some of you may believe that death is final and hell and heaven exist only in the mind. Still, that is just your personal belief and your personal belief has no impact on the truth. A blind person may believe that there is no light in the world but his personal belief cannot change the fact that the sun does shine and light up certain parts of the world for a certain number of hours each day.

We may not want many things to exist; nonetheless, they have existed and for countless Kappas* for that matter. One of these things is life in the hereafter. Nothing we do or think can ever negate its existence. The truth stands no matter what. What most people do not realize, however, is the fact that death is our final exam and once it has been taken, it is done and over with.⁵

Therefore, a wise person will take the time to learn about the reality of life so that he will know to live life correctly by performing nothing but wholesome deeds. In this way, he can be reborn in heaven instead of being reborn in hell where horrific forms of torture await. But a wiser person will make learning about the reality of life his life's top priority.

At this point the student may wonder how we can believe that the Lord Buddha's Teachings are correct. Now, the Lord Buddha never asks us to believe in Him or in His Teachings. On the contrary, He states in the Kesaputti Sutta that we should not just believe in any teachings however credible they may be until we have proven to our self whether the teachings are good or bad, correct or incorrect.⁶ Therefore, it is up to the student to learn about Buddhism and prove the teachings to himself.

* A Kappa is a unit of time which covers the period from the annihilation of the earth and part of the galaxy to the re-formation and re-habitation of the earth and part of the galaxy.

⁵ Dungtrin. **Sia Dai Kon Tai Mai Dai Aun**, B.E. 2548, p. 121, 122, 181

⁶ **Suttantapiṭaka Aṅguttaranikāya Dukkanipāta. Kesaputti Sutta.** Bangkok: Mahachulalongkorn-rajabidyalaya University Press, vol. 20, no. 66, p. 255-257

2.3.2 Learning about How to Benefit Our Self and Our Fellow Beings

The aim of learning about Buddhism is to acquire knowledge about the reality of life so that we can live our life correctly. This way, we will not only benefit our self but we will also benefit our fellow beings.

The benefits gained can be put into three categories as follows: *Titthadhammikattha* – benefits gained in the present lifetime; *Samparayikattha* – benefits gained in the next lifetime; and *Paramattha* – the ultimate benefit.⁷

1. *Titthadhammikattha* – Benefits gained in the present lifetime

This has to do with setting our life goals in order to reap the benefits of success and happiness in this lifetime. It means that we must create for our self economic stability through right livelihood. Right livelihood means earning a living through honest, lawful, and moral means. These life goals require us to cultivate our own talents and abilities through education so that we can be good at our chosen profession. It means that whatever work or profession we have decided to do; we must do everything we can to keep up with the latest information and technology so that we can be economically successful. Our economic success must not be gained at the expense of our morality. If we can do this, our economic success will give us a satisfactory level of happiness. Being ethical means that we keep our self from doing harm to others. And as a successful and ethical person, we are in a good position to serve as a good role model for our community.

2. *Samparayikattha* – Benefits gained in the next lifetime

It has to do with setting our life goals in order to reap the benefits of success and happiness in the next lifetime. Buddhism teaches that death is not the end, for as long as defilements are still with us, we cannot escape the round of rebirth. Buddhism teaches that heaven and hell exist. It also teaches that we can enjoy rebirth in heaven by accumulating a large amount of ‘merit’ through such wholesome deeds as giving alms, observing the Precepts, practicing meditation, etc. A person, who possesses a great deal of merit when reborn in the Human Realm, will be blessed with corporeal endowments, material wealth, and desirable attributes. In other words, he will be good-looking, rich, and intelligent. He will be blessed with every good thing and in such a way that he can do many good things for himself and other people as well. Most importantly, earnest accumulation of merit works to help a person attain the ultimate benefit.

⁷ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Cūlaniddes*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 67, no. 122, p. 72

3. Paramattha – The ultimate benefit

It has to do with setting our ultimate life goal which is the complete removal of defilements and the attainment of Arahatsip. We can gradually strive toward our ultimate life goal by earnestly accumulating merit and practicing meditation. Meditation practice is the means to attain the Internal Triple Gem and it is the Internal Triple Gem that can help us to remove all defilements from our mind. Once defilements can be completely removed, all the pain and suffering, which have its root cause in defilements, will also end and so will our round of rebirth. For an Arahata, physical death is truly the end, and he will be able to enjoy everlasting bliss in Nibbana. If life in the round of rebirth gives us happiness, there can never be incidents of suicide. But it is for the very reason that life in the round of rebirth is fraught with pain and suffering that Buddhism teaches us to set our ultimate life goal and to keep working toward it so that one day we can be emancipated from this vicious cycle, which is the round of rebirth.

Individuals, who have attained the Internal Triple Gem even at the level where defilements cannot be completely extinguished just yet, will still receive the kind of happiness that is far superior to that derived from sensual pleasures. Such individuals are in the position to benefit their fellow beings by acting as a virtuous friend and teaching others to attain the same kind of superior happiness. Once more and more of us can attain the Internal Triple Gem, more and more of us will know inner peace. Our collective inner peace can then lead to world peace. Wars will come to an end. People all over the world will love each other and live with each other in peace and harmony. Wars, violence and conflicts have their root cause in defilements; and defilements can be decreased and removed by the attainment of the Internal Triple Gem.

This ultimate life goal applies to every human being and every human being deserves to gain the kind of happiness which comes from working toward this goal.

Most people in the world set the kind of life goals, which they believe will give them happiness. It is the kind of happiness that is derived from sensual pleasures. They toil to realize these goals and they feel fulfilled when such goals can be realized. And they believe that their life's purpose on earth has been accomplished. Very few people bother to ask themselves if there should be more to life than just the fulfillment of sensual pleasures.⁸

Some people may wonder about this fleetingly but the daily pressure of life eventually drives the thought away and the thought may never occur to them again. Most people in the world do not realize how precious human life really is because they lack Dhamma knowledge. Moreover, most people come into the Human Realm and leave it without having made any provisions for their future existences. More importantly, the majority of us leave the Human Realm with so many unwholesome deeds that they end up having to spend a prohibitively long time in the Hell Realm. This is indeed very unfortunate and it happens simply because they lack Dhamma knowledge.

⁸ Dugtrin. **Sia Dai Kon Tai Mai Dai Aun**, B.E. 2548, p. 27-28

2.4 The History of Buddhism

Buddhism comes into being as a result of Prince Siddhattha's Self-Enlightenment more than 2,500 years ago. The happening of Buddhism is a historic event for India and the world. Buddhism brought about a great change in the beliefs and cultures of Indian society. Multitudes of Indian people from different castes which included royalty, Brahmin, Vaisaya, and Sudra converted from Brahmanism, which had been their religion for thousands of years to Buddhism.

After the Lord Buddha's attainment of Complete Nibbana, Buddhism still flourished in India for a very long time especially during the reign of Asoka the Great. This period is considered to be Buddhism's golden age. Asoka the Great had sent monastic envoys out in nine different directions to propagate Buddhism in different countries outside of India. This effort had made it possible for Buddhism to spread far and wide in Asia and Europe.

The Dhamma is Truth that stands the test of time. An individual that practices the Dhamma by studying the Scriptures and practicing meditation earnestly and correctly will most certainly gain supernormal insight. Unfortunately, the Buddhist Communities in India in later days had chosen to emphasize the use of thinking and reasoning instead of meditation practice in regards to the Dhamma-Discipline. The lack of meditation practice made it impossible for them to develop the insight necessary to penetrate the Dhamma-Discipline. As a result of the differences in their thinking and experiences, they began to disagree with each other about the Dhamma-Discipline and Buddhism was eventually split into different schools. At the same time that Buddhism was weakening from within, Hinduism and Islam were gaining strength in India. Finally, about 1,700 years after the Lord Buddha's attainment of Complete Nibbana, Buddhism disappeared from India altogether.

Buddhism may have disappeared from India but not in other parts of the world owing to the effort of Asoka the Great. Theravada Buddhism still flourishes in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma, Cambodia, and Laos whereas Mahayana Buddhism is still practiced in China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, etc. Buddhists in these countries have tried to help revive Buddhism in India with the result that the number of Buddhists in India is on the rise. Moreover, whenever Buddhism in a particular country is meeting with harm, Buddhists in other countries have been ready to lend a helping hand, hence making it possible for Buddhism to last until now.

2.5 Buddhism's Special Characteristics

Buddhism possesses many special characteristics but only four of them will be mentioned here for the reason that these four special characteristics can be easily appreciated by ordinary people. These special characteristics will be presented in comparison with the religions that subscribe to a superior being. Such comparison will be based on history and secular knowledge. The comparison is not being made for the purpose of downgrading other religions but it is a way to present facts in the same way that reporters present factual events.

The four special characteristics of Buddhism are: Buddhism is the religion of insight; Buddhism gives knowledge about all living beings; Buddhism teaches that our life is determined by our own Kamma or action and not by a superior being; and Buddhism does not subscribe to malice, violence, or war. One important special characteristic of Buddhism has to do with the Lord Buddha. This characteristic will be presented in chapter 5 under the heading of Buddha-Virtues.

2.5.1 Buddhism Is the Religion of Insight

Most religions in the world especially theism put the emphasis on faith. For example, Islam places faith as its top priority in that Muslims must believe everything which appears in the Koran. They must believe that Allah exists, and that he creates the world and everything in it. They must also believe that the Koran is the most complete religious book.⁹

Christianity is the same in that Christians must have a deep belief in the Bible and must never question anything in it. Doubts and questions are taken as a sign of weakening faith. The Inquisition in Spain, which was started in 1492 B.E., had burnt about 30,000 people at the stake for having views which contradicted with what was written in the Bible.¹⁰ However, some time later these so-called contradicted views have been accepted as correct knowledge by the entire world.

Buddhism is the religion of insight and insight is regarded as the greatest virtue. This is evident in so many Dhamma Principles which end with the term "insight". For examples: Sikkhattaya includes morality, concentration, and insight. Indriya-5 includes faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration, and insight. Complete removal of defilements requires insight while morality and concentration are the basis on which insight is formed.

⁹ Associate Professor Pheun Dokbua. **Comparison of Religions**, B.E. 2539, p. 207-208

¹⁰ Satien Bodhinanta. **The History of Buddhism, Part I**, B.E. 2539, p. 34

The Tripitaka makes many mentions about the value of insight. For example, Natthi pannasama abha - It means no light can be equal to insight.¹¹ A person possessed of insight can continue to survive even after he has lost all of his wealth. On the contrary, a person lacking in insight cannot survive even though he may have a great deal of money. Insight allows us to judge correctly the things that we hear. Insight is the source of good reputation and praise.¹² The wise sages of old agreed that insight is the most sublime quality in the same way that the full moon is the most sublime entity in the sky at night.¹³

Although Buddhism places emphasis on insight, it does not discount the importance of faith. On the contrary, the topic of faith appears first in practically all of the Dhamma Principles. The reason is before any person can make a decision to learn about a religion, he must first have faith in that religion. However, in Buddhism, faith serves merely as a starting point for leading one to learn about the reality of life. Therefore, in Buddhism faith leads to insight. Buddhism does not discourage questions about the Dhamma. It does not encourage blind faith. On the contrary, Buddhism encourages each believer to cultivate the insight necessary for penetrating Truth.

2.5.2 Knowledge about All Living Beings

Science and technology have advanced to the point where new discoveries are being made all the time. We now know about the elemental make-ups of all things material starting from the smallest entities such as atoms and particles to entities as large as galaxies and universes. These advances have had a direct impact on people's lifestyle, their concept of life, and most importantly their religion.

Many new discoveries have conflicted with the teachings in Theism. For example, Theism teaches that our earth is the center of the Universe but astronomers have found that the sun is the center of the Universe and all the planets and stars orbit around it. Galileo, who can be said to be the first to come up with this theory, was told by the people that conducted the Inquisition to keep his idea to himself; otherwise, he would be burnt at the stake.¹⁴

The knowledge provided in Buddhism is highly profound in both breadth and depth. Besides the teachings on how to escape from suffering, it has other teachings which deal with the humanities, social science, and the sciences.

¹¹ *SārathapakathāsiniĀ Aṭṭhakathā-Samyuttanikāya Sagāthavagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 24, p. 82

¹² *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Mahakappin-theragāthā*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 52, p. 348

¹³ *Jataka-kāṭṭhakāthā Aṭṭhakathā-Jataka Saṭṭakanipāṭa*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 59, p. 279

¹⁴ Nowadays astronomers know that the Solar System is only a small part of the galaxy and the universe, and in the center of the galaxy there are super-massive black holes.

The Hubble Space Telescope has been orbiting the earth in order to take images of celestial bodies billions of light years away. Even then only part of the universe has been discovered so far. This known part of the universe is equivalent to 10 to 11 percent of a large Lokadhatu. In Buddhism, there are three kinds of Lokadhatu: small, medium, and large. A small Lokadhatu is composed of 1,000 solar systems. A medium Lokadhatu is composed of one million solar systems. And a large Lokadhatu is composed of 1,000,000 million solar systems. The fact that the Lord Buddha knew all about galaxies and universes more than 2,500 years ago should give us an idea of how truly amazing His Teachings are.

Advancement in the area of medical science during the Lord Buddha's time was such that physicians were routinely doing brain and other surgeries while the first surgery in Thailand was conducted for the first time only 170 years ago during the reign of King Rama III. The use of detoxification and sauna had been used by the monks during the Lord Buddha's time to treat their various illnesses. In those days a sauna was called "a hot house".

Knowledge in the area of social science such as political science, jurisprudence, economics, oratory, etc., appears in the Vinaya Sutta and other Suttas such as Adhibatayasutta, Rajasutta, Cakkavattisutta, etc. These Suttas contain information about autonomy, and how the kings in the past ruled their kingdoms. The Kutadantasutta contains information about how to solve economic problems and how ethical monarchs solve morality problems. The Singalasutta deals with how individuals in the community should treat each other. The Vinayapitaka deals with the monastic disciplinary rules which have to do with jurisprudence directly. And these can be adapted to modern day society.

Knowledge in the humanities is the pillar of Buddhist teachings because the main objective of the Lord Buddha's Teachings is to help humanity escape from suffering. Humanity suffers from birth, aging, illnesses, and death as well as from being separated from the things and the people that we love, etc. Teachings on how to escape from suffering cannot be found in secular knowledge or in the most advanced scientific theories.

2.5.3 Our Life Is Determined by Our Own Action and Not by a Superior Being

In many religions especially in theism and polytheism, believers are taught that their lives and everything in this world depends on God alone. In Islam, believers are taught that everything that happens in their lives, their lifespan, their success or the lack thereof, etc., have all been given by their Allah. It is for these reasons that they believe Allah to be the master of life and everything in this world.

In Brahmanism, believers are taught that Brahma is the creator of the world and everything in it and Brahma is responsible for determining each human being's as well as each animal's destiny. Therefore, they must find favor with Brahma by appeasing and entreating him. In Christianity, believers are taught to go into a room, close the door, pray to God, and wait for their prayer to be answered.

Moreover, in theism and polytheism, believers are taught that an object or a superior being can cleanse them of their sin. For example, in Shintoism a purifying ceremony called 'Harai' is performed by the Shinto priest whereby the priest waves a sacred stick over the object or the person. In Brahmanism, believers are taught that water can wash away their sin. It is for this reason that the people in India since before the Lord Buddha's time up until the present time can be found bathing in the Ganges and other rivers such as the Pahuka. It was written in the Tripitaka that the masses believed the Pahuka River to be the source of merit and they took to bathing in the Pahuka in order to wash away their sin.

Buddhism teaches: "Kammaṇa vattati loka" - All living beings are governed by their own Kamma. Kamma means an intentional act conducted by the body, the word, and the mind. In other words, each human being's destiny is determined by his overall Kamma. Overall Kamma means all the Kamma or intentional acts which have been accumulated from one's previous existences up until the present existence. It is for the reason that all living beings are governed by their own overall Kamma that every human being can design his own life. For example, to be successful and prosperous, one must endeavor to perform only wholesome deeds. On the contrary, misdeeds beget failure. No other force outside of our self can make our life better or worse, for we alone are the master of our destiny. The Lord Buddha teaches: "Atta hi attano natho" - Each person is his own refuge. The Lord Buddha can only tell us the way and it is up to us to embark upon it. The Lord Buddha cannot wash our sin away and He says, "A person commits misdeeds on his own and he will suffer the ill consequences on his own. A person does not commit any misdeeds on his own and he will become pure on his own. Purity or impurity comes from one's own action. No one else can make him pure."¹⁵

On one occasion, a female monk called Venerable Punnika Theri said to the Brahmin who believed that his sin could be washed away by taking a bath, "What ignorant person told you that a person can wash away his sin by taking a bath. If that is the case, then all the animals that live in the water such as frogs, turtles, crocodiles, etc., will all be going to heaven."¹⁶

¹⁵ *Abidhammapiṭaka Kāthāvatthu*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 81, p. 477

¹⁶ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Therīgāthā*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 54, no. 466, p. 341

In terms of praying to a superior being for things, the Lord Buddha has this to say, “Longevity, good complexion, happiness, position, and heaven are indeed highly desirable. However, these five qualities cannot be obtained through prayer because if they can, then no one should ever lack these five qualities. Now, should an Ariya disciple wish for longevity, he will need to perform the kind of deeds that will bless him with longevity. And then he will experience longevity in the Celestial Realm or in the Human Realm.”¹⁷

Therefore, whatever a person wishes for, he is to work toward that wish. A person that wishes for rebirth in the Celestial Realm must perform the kind of deeds that will lead him there. That is, he must abandon unwholesomeness, earnestly perform wholesome deeds, and keep his mind clear and bright. His clear and bright mind during his final moments on earth will lead him to a rebirth in the Celestial Realm. On the contrary, if a person routinely commits misdeeds, all the prayer in the world will not be able to help him escape the State of Loss and Woe which includes the Hell Realm, etc. In the same manner, if a man throws a large stone into the water and people come together to pray for the stone to stay afloat, no amount of prayer can ever make that happen.

2.5.4 The Absence of Malice, Violence, and War

There are many religions in this world and each religion believes that its teachings are correct. Therefore, every religion aims to propagate its teachings as far and wide as possible. History teaches that several religions propagate themselves by vilifying the teachings of another religion. One example is the time when Buddhism in Sri Lanka was attacked by the religion of the colonialists. Certain religions used force and coercion to make non-believers convert to their religion, and they inflicted injury and death on a large number of non-believers. Some religions waged war against each other in order to seize Jerusalem because each thinks of Jerusalem as its own holy city.

The Crusade refers to the war which was waged between Christians and Muslims in the Middle Ages starting from 1099 to 1187. One historian by the name of Anne Fremantle said, “In all the wars waged by human beings, no other wars are as intense as the wars made in the name of religion. And in all the holy wars, no other wars claimed as many lives and lasted as long as the Crusade. The Crusade dominated the people in the Middle Ages for 200 years.”¹⁸ Major General Luangvijitvatakarn said that the Crusade came about because of the plea to Christians made by the Pope in Vatican City. And as a result of the plea, the lives of about seven million European Christians were lost.¹⁹ Today, we see in the news that people of the same religion but different schools are still killing each other routinely.

¹⁷ *Suttantapiṭaka Aṅguttaranikāya Pañcakanipāta. Aṭṭaṭṭha Sutta*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 36, no. 43, p. 97-99

¹⁸ Ann Fremantle, *The Age of Faith*, 1966, p. 53

¹⁹ Major General Luangvijitvatakarn. *World History*, B.E. 2551, p. 405,

The word “Crusade” comes from the word “Cross”. It means the Christian Cross. Every Crusader had to have this emblem on their shirt front. Everyone that wore this emblem had to go to war. If they did not, then they would be ex-communicated by the Roman Catholic Church.

In the history of Buddhism, no Buddhists have ever waged war against each other or against another religion in the name of Buddhism. Buddhism was at times the victim of violence and war as happened in India. Professor Rhys Davids, founder of the Pali Text Society, said, “From what I know, there is no record in the long history of Buddhism that ruling Buddhists have ever sought to destroy members of other religious faiths.”²⁰

Professor Dr. P.V. Bapat said that Buddhism uses only one sword and it is the sword of insight. Buddhism acknowledges only one enemy and that is Avijja or ignorance. This statement has been attested by history to be undeniably true.”²¹

What the Lord Buddha teaches in the Ovadapatimokkha has been used as the policy for propagating Buddhism since the Lord Buddha’s time. This policy calls upon Buddhists to practice patience, to abstain from malice and violence, etc. The Lord Buddha says, “Behold monks, should a thief use a saw to cut off certain parts of your body, and you harbor thoughts of revenge against him, then you have disobeyed my teachings because you lack patience. Monks, you must endeavor to keep your mind steadfast, filled with love and kindness, and free of anger. You are to spread love and kindness to the person who is harming you. You are to spread love and kindness to the entire world. You are not to harbor any thought of revenge against anyone.”²²

Buddhists have been taught that “thoughts of revenge cannot put an end to enmity”. They have been taught to “Sacrifice material wealth in order to keep our body intact, sacrifice certain parts of our body in order to preserve our life, and sacrifice material wealth, certain parts of our body, and life itself in order to keep our virtue intact.”²³ During the time of our Lord Buddha, King Vidudabha mobilized his army against the Sakya royalties. Sakya royalties were our Lord Buddha’s relatives and they were Buddhists. As a result, they refused to kill anyone even though they were learnt in the art of war, and allowed King Vidudabha to kill them as well as their infants.²⁴

²⁰ Phrasripaliyattimolee. **The Views of the World’s Sages on the Lord Buddha**, B.E. 2542, p. 63

²¹ Prof. Dr. P.V. Bapat, **In 2500 Years of Buddhism**, 1987, p. 125

²² **Suttantapiṭaka Majjhimanikāya Mūlapaṇṇatta**. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 18, no. 272, p. 264-265

²³ **Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-Nikāya-Jataka**. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 62, no. 382, p. 634

²⁴ **Dhammapadaṭṭhakāthā. Aṭṭhakathā-Khuddaka-Nikāya Gāthā-Dhammapada**. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 41, p. 36-38

The Lord Buddha leaves us with these teachings because He knows that all living beings fall under the Law of Kamma. The Law of Kamma judges all of our deeds from previous existences to the present existence. If we endeavor to perform wholesome deeds, we will meet with wholesomeness. If we commit misdeeds, we will meet with unwholesomeness. Therefore, we must endeavor to perform good deeds without accumulating any more misdeeds. The pain, the sorrow, the illnesses, and the calamities in our life are the fruits of the misdeeds committed in our previous existence(s) and in some cases in the present existence as well. Now, the reason that so many of the Sakya royalties were murdered at the same time was due to a misdeed committed in one previous existence. These same individuals had put poison into a river and caused multitudes of aquatic animals to die. On the part of King Vidudabha, he received the fruit of his atrocious act in the evening following the wholesale murder of the Sakya royalties by being drowned in the flood when the Aciravadi River overflowed its banks.²⁵

It can be said that the four special characteristics of Buddhism described above have been evident all throughout Buddhism's long history.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 39-40

2.6 How to Learn about Buddhism

In the Nibbedhikapanna Sutta, the Lord Buddha said, “Behold monks, these four virtues when practiced earnestly are the means to insight and the penetration of defilements.

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| 1. Sappurisasamseva | Keep the company of the righteous |
| 2. Saddhamsavana | Pay attention to his teachings |
| 3. Yonisomanasikara | Develop analytical reflection |
| 4. Dhammanudhammapatipatti | Practice in perfect conformity to the teachings ²⁶ |

These four virtues are better known as Vutidham which means the virtues that lead to progression. In other words, practicing these four virtues leads one to prosperity in both the secular world and the Dhamma world.

2.6.1 Sappurisasamseva: Keep the Company of the Righteous

A righteous person is a calm, decent, and ethical person. There are other words that have a similar meaning. These include “Kalayanamitra” or a virtuous friend, and “Pandit” which means a person that possesses a clear and bright mind. A Pandit is wholesome in thought, word, and action whereas a fool is a bad person because he possesses a gloomy mind. A fool is unwholesome in thought, word, and action.

The Most Venerable Phrabhavanaviriyakhun, the Vice-Abbot of Wat Phra Dhammakaya makes it easier for us to understand what a righteous person is by saying that a righteous person is a good teacher. The reason is whether we wish to learn about Buddhism or other fields of knowledge, we must first look for a good teacher.

All human beings are born ignorant and we need more experienced and more knowledgeable people to teach us about things. Our teachers facilitate our learning because they act as our guides to wherever we wish to go and explore. Accomplished scientists, who discover new theories which bring about new technologies, did not start from scratch. In other words, they had existing textbooks and knowledgeable teachers to give them the necessary foundation for making new discoveries. Einstein said that when he was twelve years old, he studied Euclid’s Geometry. He was so excited and happy that he exclaimed, “Any child that does not study this textbook can never become a great theorist.”²⁷

²⁶ **Suttantapiṭaka Samyuttanikāya Mahāvalavagga.** Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 31, no. 1653, p. 402

²⁷ Thawee Muktharakosa. **Great Scientists of the World**, B.E. 2548, p. 322

In studying Buddhism, teachers are equally necessary. When our Lord Buddha had been pursuing Perfections as a great Bodhisatta, he also had many teachers. From the Tripitaka, it was written that our Lord Buddha had ordained under eight previous Lord Buddhas.²⁸ The last time He ordained was under the Lord Kassapa Buddha. Our Lord Buddha tells us, “In that existence, I was a young man called Jotipala.... My friend, Ghatikara took me to see the Lord Kassapa Buddha. Having listened to His Dhamma lecture, I decided to ordain under Him. I had studied all nine categories of the Lord Buddha’s Teachings and had helped to propagate them.”²⁹ The great Bodhisatta Sriariyamaitreya, the next Lord Buddha, had also ordained under our Lord Gautama Buddha as “Ajita Bhikku”.

The Lord Buddha’s Self-Enlightenment takes place only in the final existence. However, while pursuing Perfections as a great Bodhisatta, many teachers are needed at certain points.

The two important qualities that we must consider when looking for a teacher are: The teacher is truly knowledgeable in the subject matter; and the teacher is a truly good person. A good teacher must be able to impart to us both the theoretical and practical knowledge of the subject matter.³⁰ When the teacher is a truly good person, it means that he can practice what he teaches. In other words, a good teacher must be able to give us correct advice and correct guidance. A good teacher must also be a good role model for us in work and in life.

Generally when we talk about teachers we mean people. However, things can also serve as our teachers especially the different media such as television, radio, the Internet, magazines, textbooks, Dhamma books, newspapers, etc. These media make all sorts of knowledge widely available to people in every corner of the world. At the same time they can also be used to spread writings and images that can have a negative or deleterious impact on the consumer.

It is well known that the media has had a big influence on education, on positive and negative role modeling. In December, B.E. 2551, a disgruntled Iraqi journalist threw a shoe at U.S. President George W. Bush at a news conference. After that incident, a similar act was repeated twice elsewhere. Once in February, B.E. 2552 when a human right activist in the U.K. threw a shoe at the Chinese Prime Minister, Mr. Wern Jiapao, during his visit to the U.K. Another incident happened in April, B.E. 2552 during a news conference in New Delhi when an Indian journalist threw a shoe at the Minister of Interior and missed.

²⁸ Eight previous Lord Buddhas were 1) Koṇḍañña Buddha, 2) Monkol Buddha, 3) Sumedha Buddha, 4) Sujāta Buddha, 5) Phussa Buddha, 6) Vessabhū Buddha, 7) Koṇāgamana Buddha and 8) Kassapa Buddha

²⁹ **Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Buddhawong**. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 73, no. 25, p. 668

³⁰ Phrabhavanaviriyakhun. **Cheevitneemeewaitoomdermpun**, B.E. 2550, p. 15-16

These two incidents might not have occurred had not the first incident been broadcasted worldwide. These incidents attest to the fact that the media exerts an enormous influence on the behavior of the people especially the youth. Therefore, there are two aspects to the media. One, the media should choose to present mainly news and information that are positive and constructive. Two, consumers should choose to consume news and information that are positive and constructive. And when problems arise anywhere in the world, the media should also be used to encourage people to come together to help solve these problems.

2.6.2 Saddhamsavana: Paying Attention to the Teachings of the Righteous

The Most Venerable Phrabhavanaviriyakhun, the Vice-Abbot of Wat Phra Dhammakaya, says that once we can find a good teacher, the next thing to do is to pay attention to what he has to teach. It means we must make sure that we understand correctly what is being taught. This requires that we do not only listen to what is being taught but we also garner each topic's main points and definitions.

In garnering the main points, the question we must ask is “What?” What is it that is being taught? What are the main points? What are the secondary points? This method applies whether we are learning from a teacher, a book, a broadcasted program, etc.

Once we have garnered the main points of each topic, the next thing we must do is to form a definition or provide a meaning for each main point that is both correct and clear theoretically and practically. A good definition must make the meaning, the practice, the direction of the practice, and the results of the practice correct and clear. This ensures that both the teacher and the student have the same understanding about the topic at hand.

If the teacher does not provide a clear definition of the topic to the student, mistakes on the part of the student are sure to be made. These mistakes will show up in the student's word, thought, and action which may cause other problems later on.

Therefore, it is very important that whatever topic is being taught or learnt, it is up to the teacher and the student to obtain the relevant definition of the topic. If the teacher did not give it, it is up to the student to ask for it. If the student cannot understand the definition given then it is up to the student to do more research about the topic on his own.

One easy way to come up with a definition is to ask the question what. For example, today we heard Luang Por's Dhamma lecture on the subject of merit. To come up with the definition of merit, we begin by asking what merit is. We can then answer that merit is a pure and refined element. It has the shape of a clear and bright sphere. Merit comes from such wholesome deeds as giving alms, observing the Precepts, practicing meditation, etc. Merit has the power to gradually cleanse and purify the mind. Moreover, merit can bless us with happiness and success.

To come up with a precise and concise definition of a topic, it requires that one knows about the topic in both breadth and depth. Otherwise, it will be like different blind people touching different parts of an elephant and each tries to come up with his own definition of what an elephant looks like. Or a child listening to a Dhamma lecture while he drifts in and out of sleep, he hears only part of the lecture and comes up with the conclusion that “Getting up late is good. It’s good to be lazy.”

2.6.3 Yonisomanasikara: Develop Analytical Reflection

The Most Venerable Phrabhavanaviriyakhun says that after we have found a good teacher and listened attentively to his teaching, the next thing we must do is to contemplate what is being taught in order to gain a deep understanding of the subject at hand. If what we listen to is a Dhamma lecture, we will also be able to understand correctly the objective of the Dhamma lecture.

One easy way to come up with the objective of a topic is by asking the question why. We can ask about 20 – 30 questions that begin with “why” and soon enough we will be able to gain a good understanding of the topic’s objective.

Let’s return to the subject of merit again. Now that we know the answer to what merit is, next we must ask the question ‘Why must we accumulate merit?’ By investigating the objective of merit, we will be able to come up with such answers like:

1. Merit can purify our body, word, and mind. We can feel this effect because we feel joyful whenever we make merit. This can have a positive effect on our personality. We may find that we are always in a good mood. We have smiles for everyone. Our mind is clear and bright. As a result, we endear our self to other people.
2. Merit can be accumulated within our mind. There is no limit to the amount of merit that can be stored in our mind. The more merit we possess, the more happiness and success we will experience. We will be blessed with ever increasing human endowments, celestial endowments, retinue of attendants, and Nibbana endowments.
3. Merit can follow us across lifetimes. Therefore, it can lead us to rebirth in an environment which is suitable for accumulating wholesome deeds. Merit also blesses us with corporeal endowments, material wealth, and desirable attributes, which allow us to experience ever increasing happiness and prosperity.
4. Merit allows us to design our life for future existences. We can direct our merit-making activities accordingly so as to give us the desired benefits. A person that possesses a vast amount of merit will meet with a high level of success and happiness whereas a person that possesses a small amount of merit will meet with a low level of success and happiness.

Having asked about 40 to 50 “why” questions from different angles, eventually we will be able to penetrate the true objective of merit. And we will be able to conclude that we accumulate merit in order to rectify our past misdeeds; create happiness and prosperity for the present existence; and ultimately, remove all defilements that are the root cause of all suffering.

The above is just one example of how to contemplate a teaching in-depth. When we contemplate what is taught to us in a correct and penetrating manner, we cannot help but develop the kind of wisdom that allows us to think, say, and do things in a correct and effective manner.

A student, who has learnt to contemplate every teaching in this manner, will have the kind of penetrating wisdom that is superior to his classmates. A story was told about three young men who had just completed their study from the same school. As they were traveling home together, they happened upon some elephant dung. The first man said, “Elephant dung!” The second man said, “It is the dung of a cow elephant.” This man noticed that there was a round puddle of urine beside the pile of dung, for if it were a bull elephant the urine would be at the front of the dung. The third man said, “This cow elephant is blind in one eye.” This man could make this observation because he noticed that only the vegetation to one side had been eaten. This story demonstrates the power of observation which results from the second and third man’s inquisitiveness.

2.6.4 Dhammanudhammapatipatti: Practice in Perfect Conformity to the Teachings

The Most Venerable Phrabhavanaviriyakhun says that after having found a good teacher, listened to his teaching and contemplated it, the next thing one must do is to practice what has been taught. In other words, whatever the teacher can do, the student must be able to do it as well. One is not well-versed only in theory but must be able to put the theory to work. Theory and practice must go hand-in-hand.

The Arahant Venerable Ananda said, “A person, who is highly educated but does not put what he has learnt into practice, can be compared to a blind person carrying a torch.” Naturally, a torch cannot be of any use to a blind person, since he cannot see anything anyway. It is like a person who herds dairy cows for a living but never gets to drink their milk.

After summarizing the teaching, contemplating it until a good understanding has been gained, the next step is to put the gained knowledge into practice. This is carried out by asking the question “How?” Let’s return to the subject of merit once again. After we have learnt what merit is and understood why we must accumulate it, the next step is to ask “How can we accumulate merit?” And we find that there are at least three ways of making merit. These include alms-giving, observing the Precepts, and practicing meditation. Next, we need to find more details about how to give alms, observe the Precepts, and practice meditation.

In practicing meditation or doing any work, there are at least three requirements that we must meet in order to achieve the desired result. These requirements include accuracy, effort, and sufficiency.

Accuracy: This is the ability to practice the teaching in an accurate manner. It is like when we want to take a trip somewhere, we need to get on the right road in order to get to our destination in a timely manner.

Effort: It means that we must persist in doing the work to the best of our ability until the work gets done.

Sufficiency: It means not overdoing or under-doing something. Doing something just right is very important. For example, if we overeat, we will feel uncomfortable. In terms of meditation practice, if we overdo it, our body will experience discomfort. However, if we are lax about it, we will give in to sensuality and get nowhere. Therefore, the best way is the Middle Way.

In summary, there are four aspects to learning about Buddhism: Sappurisasamseva: Keep the company of the righteous (Who?), Saddhamsavana: Pay attention to his teaching (What?), Yonisomanasikara: Develop analytical reflection (Why?), and Dhammanudhammapatipatti: Practice in perfect conformity to the teaching (How?).

The questions what, why, and how are also used in the scientific realm when investigating a particular phenomenon. All the outstanding scientists have used them. And they are used by Stephen William Hawking who is considered to be the brightest theoretical physicist in the present days.

He said, “My objective is to find clear-cut answers to what the universe is and why must there be a universe.” He also said, “Every child has a tendency to ask about everything around them. They want to know about things. They want to know why something must be that way. And they want to know how something happens. But as they are growing up they are told that those questions are silly. Or they never receive a satisfactory answer to their questions. As for me, I consider myself a child that refuses to grow up. I continue to pose the questions why and how and at times these questions lead me to a clear answer.”³¹

Nonetheless, what most scientists lack is meditation practice. Therefore, they cannot penetrate the reality of the world and the reality of life in the same way that our Lord Buddha and the Arahats can.

³¹ Stephen William Hawking. **A Brief History of Time**, 1988, p.240, 248-249



Assignments:

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

Chapter 3

The Nature of Life

According to Buddhism

Chapter 3

The Nature of Life According to Buddhism

The Nature of Life According to Buddhism

3.1 The Components of Life

3.1.1 The Five Aggregates

3.1.2 The Form, Location, and Nature of Our Mind

3.1.3 The Refined Form of the Five Aggregates

3.1.4 The Five Aggregates in the Opinion of Phramonkolthepmuni

3.2 The Round of Rebirth

3.2.1 Samsara

3.2.2 Evidence of the Round of Rebirth

3.2.3 Tivatta Is the Cause of Rebirth

3.2.4 Cakkavala and the Different Realms of Existence

3.2.5 Proving the Reality of Cakkavala and the Different Realms of Existence

3.2.6 Suffering in the Round of Rebirth and the Ultimate Refuge

Concepts

1. Each human being is made up of five aggregates. These include corporeality, sensation, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. These five aggregates are divided into two categories of corporeality (1) and mentality (4).
2. The five aggregates are composed of coarse components and refined components. The coarse aggregates are what we can see with the physical eyes. The refined aggregates exist in layers inside the coarse aggregates. The refined aggregates include the Refined Human Body or the astral body, the Celestial Bodies, the Form-Brahma Bodies, the Non-Form Brahma Bodies, and the Dhammakaya Bodies.
3. When a human being that still possesses defilements dies, he will have to continue to undergo the round of rebirth indefinitely. Defilements force human beings to commit misdeeds. Misdeeds in turn incur retribution, which propels these human beings to be reborn in the States of Unhappiness. These include the Hell Realm, the Peta Realm, the Asurakaya Realm, and the Animal Realm.

If we want to leave the round of rebirth, we must accumulate merit to the best of our ability. The merit we have accumulated will go to gradually cleanse our mind of defilements such that after we die, we will be reborn in the States of Happiness. These include the Human Realm, the Celestial Realm, and the Brahma Realm. Rebirth in the States of Happiness is determined by the amount of our accumulated merit.

Once we have accumulated merit to the fullest extent, we will be able to attain the Internal Triple Gem whereby our defilements can be completely removed. At that point, we will be emancipated from the round of rebirth and enjoy everlasting bliss in Nibbana.

Objectives

This chapter enables the student to gain an understanding of the nature of life under the topics of the components of life, the round of rebirth, and how to be emancipated from the round of rebirth.

Chapter 3

The Nature of Life According to Buddhism

3.1 The Components of Life

The components of life here cover the four aspects of the five aggregates, the shape and nature of our mind, the refined components of the five aggregates, and the five aggregates in the opinion of Phramonkolthepmuni.

3.1.1 The Five Aggregates

In the Bhara Sutta, the Lord Buddha said that each human being is made up of the five aggregates or Khanda-5. These include corporeality or Rupakhanda, sensation or Vedanakhanda, perception or Sannakhanda, mental formations or Sankharakhanda, and consciousness or Vinnanakhanda.¹

The word “**Khanda**” means group, category, or aggregate as in Khandaloka.²

The five aggregates can be divided into the two categories of corporeality (1) or Rupakhanda-1 and mentality (4) or Namakhanda-4. Mentality (4) or Namakhanda-4 includes sensation or Vedanakhanda, perception or Sannakhanda, mental formations or Sankharakhanda, and consciousness or Vinnanakhanda.³

Corporeality means “Sarira”⁴ or the physical body⁵ whereas mentality or the mind means “Asarira” or not of the physical body as was written in the Tripitaka, “Durangaman akajaran asariran guhasayan ye cittan sannamessanti mokkhanti marabundhana.”⁶

The word “Asariran” is sometimes translated as the absence of the physical body. This does not appear to be correct, for it should mean not of the physical body instead.

¹ *Suttantapiṭaka Samyuttanikāya Khandhavalavagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 27, no. 49, p. 58-59

² *Saddhammapajjotikā Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya. Mahāniddes*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 65, p. 106

³ *Manorothpuranī. Aṭṭhakathā-aṅguttaranikāya Tikanipāta. Aṭṭhakathātītatathāyatana Sutta*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 34, p. 285

⁴ *Papañcasudhanī Aṭṭhakathā-majjhimanikāya Uparipañṇāsa*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 23, p. 30

⁵ *Paramatthadīpanī Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Theragāthā*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 53, p. 63

⁶ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Khuddakapāṭha*. Siamrath Pali Language, vol. 25, no. 13, p. 19-20

The reason is the mind does have a physical form. It appears as a clear sphere. However, the mind is composed of a refined element and is therefore not visible to the physical eyes.

The mind or “Citta” may be called by many different names as follows: mano, manas, hadai, pandara, mana, manayatana, manindriya, vinnan, vinnanakhanda, and manovinnandhatu, which is formed by vinnanakhanda.⁷

Human beings are made up of the five aggregates. These can be divided into the two categories of corporeality or Rupakhanda and mentality or Namakhanda. Mentality is the same as the mind or Citta. And contrary to current understanding, the mind is not the same as the brain. They are separate entities altogether. The brain is part of the physical body whereas the mind is not.

We will now present a more detailed description of the five aggregates.

1) Corporeality

The Pali word for corporeality is “Rupa”, which means a thing that must come to an end as a result of conflicting factors. It was written in the Kevatta Sutta and the Commentary Titathayatana Sutta that corporeality or “Rupa” is made up of Pathavidhatu, Apodhatu, Tejodhatu, Vayodhatu, and Akasadhatu.⁸

The word “Dhatu” means to maintain.⁹ Dhatu means a thing that can maintain its own condition.

Pathavidhatu means the earth element. It includes things that are hard such as hair, nails, teeth, leather, flesh, tendons, bones, bone marrow, spleen, heart, liver, connective tissue, kidney, lung, large intestine, etc.

Apodhatu means the water element. It includes things that moisten or wet such as bile, phlegm, lymph, blood, sweat, fats, tears, soft fatty tissue, spit, mucus, marrow, feces, etc.

Tejodhatu means the fire element. It includes things that give warmth and heat. The fire element keeps the body warm, makes the body deteriorate, aids digestion, etc.

⁷ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Cūlaniddes Khagkavisana-suttaniddes*. Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Press, vol. 30, no. 136, p. 442

Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Mahāniddes Sarīputta-suttaniddes. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 66, no. 946, p. 597

Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Mahāniddes Kāma-suttaniddes. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 65, no. 4, p. 3

⁸ *Suttantapiṭaka Dīgha-nikāya Sīlakhandhavagga. Kevatta Sutta*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 12, no. 343, p. 231

Manorothpuranī. Aṭṭhakathā-aṅguttaranikāya Tikanipāta. Aṭṭhakathātitathāyatana Sutta. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 34, p. 284

⁹ Phradhammakittivong (Thongdee Suratejo). *Saavvikrok* [Vocabulary Analysis], B.E.2550, p. 337

Vayodhatu means the wind element. It includes things that blow such as upward and downward wind movement, gas in the stomach, gas in the intestines, gas that moves along large and small organs, breaths, etc.

Akasadhatu means space and includes the ear canal, the nostrils, the oral cavity, the esophagus, etc.

2) Mentality

The Pali word for mentality is “Nama” which means leading to emotions.¹⁰ Emotions arise when the mind takes in corporeality, sound, smell, taste, touch, and a mind-object. Mentality (4) or Namakhanda-4 includes sensation, perception, mental formations, and consciousness.

Sensation (Vedana) means feeling such as happiness. One feels happy when the body feels good and the mind feels good or one feels unhappy when the body does not feel good and the mind does not feel good. It also includes neutral feeling as in neither happiness nor unhappiness.

Perception (Sanna) means the ability to remember such as remembering the physical form, the voice, the smell, the touch, and the emotion.

Mental formations (Sankhara) means thought such as thinking about standing up, thinking about walking, thinking about sitting, thinking about speaking. Thought can be divided into three types: Good or wholesome thought, bad or unwholesome thought, and thought that is neither good nor bad (Abbayakarata).

Consciousness (Vinnana) means cognition such as knowing the physical body as seen by the eyes, knowing the sound as heard by the ears, knowing the smell through the nose, knowing the taste through the tongue, knowing the touch through the body, and knowing the emotion through the mind.

3.1.2 The Form, Location, and Nature of Our Mind

Our mind has the form of a sphere. The Lord Buddha says, “The first Citta Sphere is born in the mother’s womb. The first Vinnana Sphere arises from the first Citta Sphere. The first Vinnana Sphere is therefore the birth of that living being.”¹¹ There is a lot of information about Citta and the student can look it up in the Abhidhamma Pitaka.

¹⁰ *Saddhammapajjotikā Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Cūlaniddes*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 67, p. 641

¹¹ *Vinayapiṭaka Mahāvagga Part I*. Siam Rath Press, vol. 4, no. 141, p. 153

Our mind or Citta is located inside “Hadayavatthu” or the heart. It was written in the Haliddakani Sutta, “Citta dwells inside Hadayavatthu. It is Manovinnanadhatu (mind-consciousness element).¹² Or “Citta dwells inside Hadayavatthu the way a spider sleeps inside its web.”¹³

According to the Tripitaka, there are at least five aspects to the nature of our mind.

1. Our mind is constantly struggling. It is therefore difficult to keep still.
2. Our mind is difficult to control. It is quick but it is capable of being trained.
3. Our mind is made up of a refined element. It is extremely difficult to see it.
4. Our mind is not our physical body. It dwells inside a cave, which is our body.

5. Our mind was originally clear and bright but it becomes gloomy because of defilements.

The following statements are made by the Lord Buddha about our mind.

1. Wise people know to keep straight the mind which is constantly struggling and difficult to keep still in the way that an arrow-smith knows to fashion an arrow by making it straight.
2. It is a good thing to train the mind which is quick, difficult to control, and prone to sense-desire. A well-trained mind is the source of happiness.
3. A wise person endeavors to control his mind which is extremely difficult to see, extremely refined, and prone to sense-desire. A mind under control is the source of happiness.
4. Whoever can restrain his mind, which travels alone to far-away places, not of the body, dwelling in a cave, can be liberated from Mara’s shackles.

The word “cave” here means the body as stated in the Tripitaka, “The words: body, cave, boat, vehicle, termite mound, nest, city, hut, pot, etc., are the names used to call the physical body.”¹⁴

5. Behold, monks, the mind was clear and bright but it becomes gloomy as a result of defilements.

In 3) where the Lord Buddha says that it is extremely difficult to see the mind attests to the fact that our mind has a physical form, for if it does not possess a form, how can one see it? However, the mind is difficult to see because it is made up of a refined element.

¹² *Sāraṭhapakathāsini* *Aṭṭhakathā-samyuttanikāya Sahāyatanavagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 28, p. 241

¹³ *Aṭṭhasalini* *Aṭṭhakathā-dhammasaṅghni*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 76, p. 92

¹⁴ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Mahāniddes Guhaṭṭhaka-suttaniddes*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 65, no. 31, p. 187

3.1.3 The Refined Components of the Five Aggregates

The aggregates, which make up life as we know it, are composed of the coarse and refined forms. The Lord Buddha says, “My disciples consider the five aggregates with their insight. They consider the fact that corporeality, sensation, perception, mental formations, and consciousness which have gone past or have not happened or are now, externally or internally, coarse or refined.....”¹⁵

In the Mahapunnama Sutta, the Lord Buddha said,

Behold monks, any corporeality in the past, in the future or now, external or internal, coarse or refined... This is called Rupakhandha.

Any sensation in the past, in the future or now, external or internal, coarse or refined... This is called Vedanakhandha.

Any perception in the past, in the future or now, external or internal, coarse or refined... This is called Sannakhandha.

Any mental formations in the past, in the future or now, external or internal, coarse or refined... This is called Sankharakhandha.

Any consciousness in the past, in the future or now, external or internal, coarse or refined.....This is called Vinnanakhandha.¹⁶

This saying of the Lord Buddha attests to the fact that there are five external and internal aggregates as well as five coarse and refined aggregates.

Rupakhanda is the corporeality whereas Namakhanda is the mind and both have external and internal forms. The Bhikkuni Nanda said, “I am a person who exercises carefulness. As I conduct my research using the ingenious means, I can see the internal and external bodies as they exist. Therefore, I became tired of my body and released all of my internal desire. I am a careful person. I am not attached to anything at all and all of my craving has been quelled.”¹⁷ In the Mahasatipatthana Sutta, the Lord Buddha said, “Monks must contemplate the body within the body.....the sensation within the sensation.....the mind within the mind.....the Dhamma within the Dhamma.”¹⁸ This saying of the Lord Buddha indicates that within our body there are five internal aggregates.

¹⁵ *Suttantapiṭaka Majjhimanikāya Mūlapaṇṇāsa*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 19, no. 401, p. 84

¹⁶ *Suttantapiṭaka Majjhimanikāya Uparipaṇṇāsa*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 22, no. 123, p. 170-172

¹⁷ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Therīgāthā Nandātherīgāthā*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 54, no. 442, p. 136

¹⁸ *Suttantapiṭaka Majjhimanikāya Mūlapaṇṇāsa. Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 17, no. 132, p. 606

3.1.4 The Five Aggregates in the Opinion of Phramonkolthepmuni

1. Phramonkolthepmuni's Life History

Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro) or more commonly referred to as Luang Pu Wat Paknam was born on Friday, October 10, B.E. 2427 which corresponds with the 6th day of the 11th waning moon in the year of the monkey. Luang Pu was born in the village of Neuah opposite Wat Songpinong in Songpinong Tambon, Songpinong Amphoe, Supanburi Province.¹⁹ His father's name was Ngern Sae Jew. His mother's name was Soodjai Meekaewnoi. The family sold rice along the Songpinong Canal and to other Amphoes.

Luang Pu had a resolute nature since childhood. Whatever work he decided to undertake, he would persist until it got done. Luang Pu took over the rice-selling business after his father's passing when he was just 14 years old. When he was 19 years old, he came to the realization that life was full of suffering and at death everyone had to leave their material wealth behind. Therefore, Luang Pu made a resolute wish at 19, "Let me not die before I can ordain and once I ordain, I will remain in the monkhood for the rest of my life."

Luang Pu finally entered the monkhood in the first part of July in B.E. 2449 when he was 22 years old at Wat Songpinong in Songpinong Amphoe, Supanburi Province. He received the ordained name of Candasaro.

Having entered the monkhood, Luang Pu devoted his time to the study of Scriptures. He also practiced meditation daily until he attained the Dhammakaya Bodies on the 15th day of the 10th waxing moon, twelve years after he entered the monkhood. He attained Phra Dhammakaya at Wat Boatbon in Bangkuvien Amphoe, Nontaburi Province.

In that morning, Luang Pu went inside the Upasatha Hall to practice meditation. He vowed that he would not rise from his meditation seat until the gong signaling the midday meal was sounded. Luang Pu closed his eyes and chanted "samma araham" over and over again. In the meantime he could feel that he was beginning to experience aches and pain and the aches and pain were becoming more and more intense until he felt as though every single one of his bones was about to burst into pieces. Luang Pu thought about quitting several times but having already made his vow, Luang Pu persisted in his meditation practice until eventually his mind became calmer and calmer. Finally, his mind became quiet and still. And he experienced a pure crystal sphere the size of a chicken egg yolk. The experience made him feel incredibly joyous. All of his aches and pain disappeared. And that was when he heard the midday meal gong.

¹⁹ Thailand is made up of provinces, each province is made up of Amphoes, each Amphoe is made up of Tambons, and each Tambon is made up of villages.

Luang Pu was cheerful and happy all day long. He could still ‘see’ the crystal sphere in the center of his body all the time. In the evening, Luang Pu went inside the Upasatha Hall once again. This time he made a vow, “My flesh and blood can go dry leaving just skin, tendons, and bones, I will not rise from this seat until I can attain the least of the Lord Buddha’s enlightened knowledge.”

Having made his vow, Luang Pu sat in a half-lotus position and commenced his meditation practice. It was about midnight when the crystal sphere at the center of his body became clearer and brighter but its size had become as big as the sun. Luang Pu had no idea how to proceed from there because no one he knew had ever had such an inner experience.

As his mind was kept completely still on the crystal sphere, he heard a voice rising from the middle of the crystal sphere, which said, “Majjhima patipada”.* Along with the voice, Luang Pu saw a very bright pinpoint in the middle of the crystal sphere. This pinpoint was brighter than the crystal sphere itself. Luang Pu kept his attention on the pinpoint while thinking that perhaps this is the Middle Way, since it was right at the center of the sphere. Luang Pu decided to keep on looking at the pinpoint to see what would happen.

He found that the pinpoint gradually enlarged itself until it was the size of the original crystal sphere which had already disappeared. As Luang Pu kept his mind on the center of the new crystal sphere, another crystal sphere appeared in its place. Each new sphere was clearer and brighter than the old one. Finally, Luang Pu experienced the Refined Bodies appearing one after another until he attained the Dhammakaya Bodies. Phra Dhammakaya looks like a bright, crystal clear Buddha Image with a small lotus bloom at the top of His crown. At the time, Luang Pu heard Phra Dhammakaya’s voice say, “That’s correct”. Upon hearing this, Luang Pu was overwhelmed with great joy. Luang Pu remarked softly to himself,

“So...it is this difficult. That’s why no one could attain it. Perception, sensory registration, central processing, and cognition must converge together. Cessation brings about extinguishment. Extinguishment brings about birth.”

Luang Pu also remarked, “Gambhīrocayam: the Dhamma is so profound that it cannot be guessed at. It is beyond thought and imagination. As long as one is still thinking or imagining, one cannot attain the Dhamma. To attain the Dhamma, thought and imagination must cease altogether. Cessation brings about extinguishment and extinguishment brings about birth. Therefore, no extinguishment equals no birth. Consider this, people, this is the real thing. This is where the juncture is. If this process does not occur, inner experience can never be attained.”²⁰

* It means the Middle Way.

²⁰ Varoporn. **Tam Roi Phramonkolthepmuni**, B.E. 2543, p. 9-10

After Luang Pu attained Phra Dhammakaya, he continued with his meditation practice until he became so proficient in it that he could employ Phra Dhammakaya to study Vijja Dhammakaya. Vijja Dhammakaya gives rise to penetrating knowledge. Penetrating knowledge comes from penetrating vision. Penetrating vision, in turn, comes from seeing with the Dhammakaya-Eye. It is for these reasons that Luang Pu Wat Paknam is referred to as the Discoverer of Vijja Dhammakaya. Luang Pu had also taught a large number of people in his days to attain Phra Dhammakaya. After being appointed the Abbot of Wat Paknam, Luang Pu was dedicated to the teaching and training of the monks and novice monks. He encouraged Dhamma education in both Scriptures study and meditation practice. Wat Paknam during Luang Pu's days had the highest number of monks and novice monks.

Luang Pu had a top student by the name of Master Nun Chandra or more often referred to as Khun Yai who was exceptionally proficient in Vijja Dhammakaya. After Luang Pu's passing, Khun Yai founded Wat Phra Dhammakaya with the help of the Most Venerable Phrathepyanmahamuni or Luang Por Dhammajayo. Presently, Wat Phra Dhammakaya is aiming to propagate Vijja Dhammakaya as discovered by Luang Pu to every corner of the world. This endeavor will not only fulfill Luang Pu's wish but will enable all humanity to gain inner peace which will eventually lead to lasting world peace.

The subjects of Phra Dhammakaya and Vijja Dhammakaya are part of the original teachings of Buddhism according to the writings that appear in the Tripitaka, the Commentary, and other Buddhist texts in Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. More details about these writings will be presented in chapter 4.

2. The Refined Aggregates in Meditation Practice

Luang Pu Wat Paknam had given several Dhamma lectures on the topic of the five aggregates or Khanda-5. In his fourth lecture, Luang Pu taught about the Adittapariyaya Sutta. He taught about the five aggregates in his ninth lecture, the Satipatthana Sutta in his 45th lecture, and Tilakkhanadigatha in his 42nd lecture, etc.

Luang Pu attained the knowledge about the refined aggregates through meditation practice. He penetrated these refined aggregates by employing the Dhammakaya-Eye and the Dhammakaya-Insight. Luang Pu had later taught about the refined aggregates to the people through his Dhamma lectures.

According to Luang Pu, the refined aggregates exist in layers inside the body of every human being. In other words, within the physical human body which we can see with our physical eyes, there exist refined bodies or refined Rupakhanda as well as refined mentality or refined Namakhanda which are not visible to the physical eyes.

These coarse and refined aggregates include:

1. The five aggregates of the coarse human body or the physical body
2. The five aggregates of the refined human body or the astral body
3. The five aggregates of the coarse celestial body
4. The five aggregates of the refined celestial body
5. The five aggregates of the coarse Form-Brahma body
6. The five aggregates of the refined Form-Brahma body
7. The five aggregates of the coarse Non-Form Brahma body
8. The five aggregates of the refined Non-Form Brahma body

In addition, there are ten other aggregates called “Dhammakhanda” which lie in layers inside the human body. This brings the number of aggregates to 18. Dhammakhanda include:

9. The Dhammakhanda of the coarse Gotrabhu Dhammakaya or Gotrabhumagga
10. The Dhammakhanda of the refined Gotrabhu Dhammakaya or Gotrabhuphala
11. The Dhammakhanda of the coarse Sotapanna Dhammakaya or Sotapattimagga
12. The Dhammakhanda of the refined Sotapanna Dhammakaya or Sotapattiphala
13. The Dhammakhanda of the coarse Sakadagami Dhammakaya or Sakadagamimagga
14. The Dhammakhanda of the refined Sakadagami Dhammakaya or Sakadagamiphala
15. The Dhammakhanda of the coarse Anagami Dhammakaya or Anagamimagga
16. The Dhammakhanda of the refined Anagami Dhammakaya or Anagamiphala
17. The Dhammakhanda of the coarse Arahant Dhammakaya or Arahattamagga
18. The Dhammakhanda of the refined Arahant Dhammakaya or Arahattaphala

All of these coarse and refined aggregates except for the five aggregates of the coarse human body as well as all of the Dhammakhanda are made up of refined elements which are invisible to the physical eyes. No scientific instruments can detect their presence. The existence of refined aggregates may be compared to the sunlight which we can detect or see as having no color through our physical eyes. It is only when the light is made to pass through a prism that seven colors of light emerge: violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red.

There is only one way to ‘see’ these refined aggregates and all the Dhammakhanda. And the way is meditation practice. During meditation, our mind must be at the same level of refinement as these refined aggregates and Dhammakhanda in order to ‘see’ them.

The refined human body or the astral body is also our dream self. During sleep, we may dream that we go here or there and once we are awake we may or may not recall the dream or we may recall it in parts. When we have such a dream, it is our astral body that leaves the body to go to these places. The astral body returns to the coarse human body after it finishes its travel. When we die, it is also our astral body which leaves our body to go in search of rebirth, the destination of which is dictated by our overall Kamma. If we possess a lot of merit, our rebirth will take place in the Celestial Realm and the astral body will assume a celestial body. If we possess a lot of demerit, our rebirth will take place in the State of Loss and Woe which includes the Animal Realm, the Peta Realm, the Asurakaya Realm, and the Hell Realm.

When our astral body leaves our physical body at the moment of death, it is akin to dreaming except that our astral body cannot return to our physical body and our physical body will never wake up again. The reason is our coarse human body and our refined human body have already been completely separated in the same way that a pea is separated from its shell.

The body of each celestial being in the Celestial Realm possesses the coarse and refined celestial bodies in the same way that a human being on earth possesses the coarse and refined human bodies. On the day that a celestial being ceases to be, his refined human body will be the first to leave his coarse celestial body. If the individual possesses a lot of merit, then the refined celestial body which resides inside the refined human body will leave the refined human body in order to seek rebirth in the Celestial Realm once again.²¹

The situation is the same for Form and Non-Form Brahma beings. When a human being practices meditation until he can achieve the Form Jhanas or the Non-Form Jhanas, it means that he has attained either the Form Brahma body or the Non-Form Brahma body which dwells inside him. At death, whichever Brahma body he has attained will leave his coarse human body in order to be reborn in the Form-Brahma Realm or the Non-Form Brahma Realm depending on the level of his meditative attainments.

All of the Dhammakaya Bodies such as Gotrabhu Dhammakaya are the entities that lead each human being to attain Enlightenment. These are the same entities attained by our Lord Gautama Buddha and they led Him to attain Self-Enlightenment. Dhammakaya is the source of the Triple Gem. The details of which will be covered in chapter 4.

²¹ Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro). **The 69th Dhamma Lecture**, Part 30 on *Bhattanumodanagāthā*, B.E.2538, p. 364

In the Commentary “Sona Sutta” and in the book “Tippayaamnāt” by Mahamakut College, there are interesting mentions about the Inner Bodies which lie inside the Lord Buddha’s body as well as every human being’s body. It was written in the Commentary “Sona Sutta”, “I’ve heard that our Lord Buddha possesses “**Namakaya** endowments”, “**Rupakaya** endowments” as well as “**Dhammakaya** endowments”.²²

In the book “Tippayaamnāt” compiled by Phraariyagunadhara who is skilled in both Scriptures Study and meditation practice at Wat Kaosuanklang in Khonkaen Province, he said that it was mentioned in one Theravada Scripture that the Lord Buddha’s body can be divided into three parts namely “**Rupakaya**”, “**Namakaya**”, and “**Dhammakaya**”.

1. The Lord Buddha’s “**Rupakaya**” is the body which was given to him by His parents. It is the ordinary human body that is made up of the four elements.
2. The Lord Buddha’s “**Namakaya**” is the inner body. Some sages called them celestial body. It looks like the coarse human body but it is hundreds of times quicker and more capable. It can leave the coarse human body to go wherever it wants. When the coarse human body dies, this inner body does not die but leaves the body to seek rebirth. **Namakaya** exists inside every human being.
3. The Lord Buddha’s “**Dhammakaya**” is the pure Dhamma Body. It means the Lord Buddha’s mind which is removed from all defilements. The Lord Buddha’s mind is pure, clear, and as bright as the sun in the sky. **Dhammakaya** is the real Lord Buddha. **Dhammakaya** is beyond birth, aging, death, and all suffering. It is the body which is true, permanent, and everlasting. It is the body of the Dhamma.²³

These comments correspond with Luang Pu’s teachings. Luang Pu taught that there are layers of inner bodies inside the coarse human body. Other mentions of **Dhammakaya** in the Buddhist Scriptures will be presented in chapter 4.

3. What Can Meditative Attainments Tell Us about Our Mind?²⁴

3.1) Components of the Mind

The mind has four components. They include perception, sensory registration, central processing, and cognition. These four components converge together to form the mind. Each of the four components has the form of a clear sphere. The cognition sphere lies within the central processing sphere. The central processing sphere lies within the

²² *Paramatthadīpanī Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Udāna. Aṭṭhakathāsoṇa Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 44, p. 557

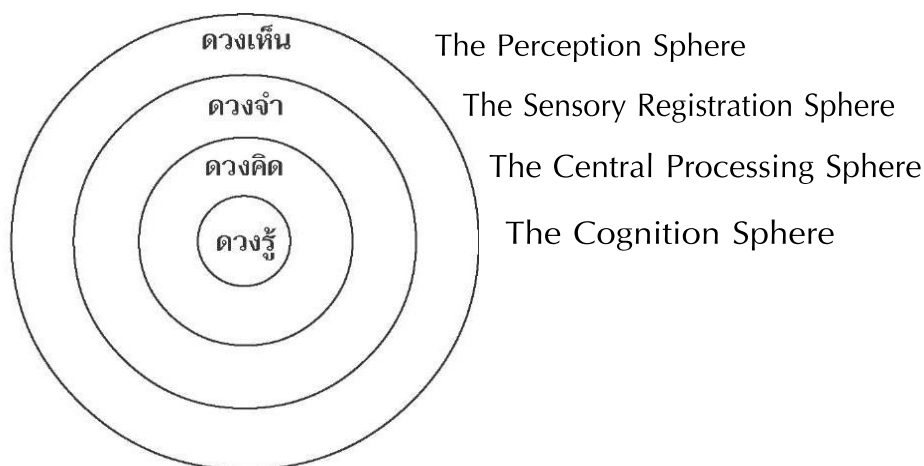
²³ Phraariyakunathan. *Tippayaamnāt*, p. 507-512

²⁴ Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro), *The 69th Dhamma Lecture*, Part 46 on *the Mahasatipatṭhāna Sutta*, B.E.2538, p. 537-548

sensory registration sphere. And the sensory registration sphere lies within the perception sphere.²⁵ See Figure 1.

The four components of the mind are called Namakhandas-4. They include Vedana (perception), Sanna (sensory registration), Sankhara (central processing), and Vinnana (cognition).

Components of the Mind (Figure 1)



The Most Venerable Phrabhavanaviriyakhun or Luang Por Dattajeevo, the Vice-Abbot of Wat Phra Dhammakaya, describes the mind by using an analogy. He says that the mind is like a coconut which is made up of different layers: epicarp, mesocarp, endocarp, and endosperm.

The first layer of the mind is the same size as our eye socket. Its function is to see or perceive. It can be compared to the coconut's epicarp. The second layer is the same size as our eyeball. Its function is to remember. It can be compared to the coconut's mesocarp. The third layer is the same size as the pupil of our eye. Its function is to think. It can be compared to the coconut's endocarp. The fourth layer is the same size as the light in our eye. Its function is to know. It can be compared to the coconut's endosperm.

These four components can converge together or separate from each other. When they converge together, they stack one on top of another as depicted in Figure 1. When the four components converge together, they dwell at the center of the sixth base of our body. If we have two pieces of strings, one is pulled from the navel straight through to the back; another is pulled from the right side of the body straight through to the left side of the body, the point where the two strings intersect is the location of the Dhamma Sphere. This Dhamma Sphere gives rise to our human body. Therefore, it is also called the Human Dhamma Sphere. The Dhamma Sphere is clear and pure. It is the same size as a chicken egg yolk. It is as clear as a mirror.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 230-231

Our mind dwells in the middle of the Dhamma Sphere. In other words, the Dhamma Sphere is where our perception, sensory registration, central processing, and cognition are located. The Perception Sphere lies in the middle of the Dhamma Sphere. The Sensory Registration Sphere lies in the middle of the Dhamma Sphere but inside the Perception Sphere. The Central Processing Sphere lies in the middle of the Dhamma Sphere but inside the Sensory Registration Sphere. The Cognition Sphere lies in the middle of the Dhamma Sphere but inside the Central Processing Sphere.

Luang Pu Wat Paknam had this to say about the four components of our mind, “The Perception Sphere is in the center of the sixth base. The Sensory Registration Sphere is in the middle of the heart. It is smaller than the Perception Sphere. The Central Processing Sphere is in the middle of the Sensory Registration Sphere but smaller. The Cognition Sphere is in the middle of the Central Processing Sphere but smaller and is the same size as the light in our eyes.....”²⁶

What Luang Pu teaches about the middle of the heart corresponds with what was written in the Commentary, “The mind is located in the heart.”

3.2) The Different Bases of Our Mind

According to Luang Pu Wat Paknam, our mind is located inside our heart but there are seven additional bases where our mind can be located.

The first base is at the nostril: left for women and right for men.

The second base is at the corner of the eye: left for women and right for men.

The third base is at the nerve center at the eye level. Picture two strings, one is pulled from between the eyes through to the back of the head, the other is stretched from the left side of the ear through to the right side of the ear. The place where the two strings intersect is called the nerve center.

The fourth base is at the roof of the mouth in the area above the uvula.

The fifth base is at the entrance of the throat, in the middle of the throat. It is above the Adam’s apple.

The sixth base is at the center of the body at the navel level.

Normally the human mind resides at the sixth base in the middle of the Dhamma Sphere. The first to the fifth bases are temporary resting places for the mind. The seventh base is the most important resting place for the mind because it is the entrance to the Path and Fruit of Nibbana.

²⁶ Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro), **The 69th Dhamma Lecture**, Part 19 on *Ovādapāṭimokkha*, B.E.2538, p. 230-232

The seventh base is at the center of the body and two fingers width above the sixth base.

The seventh base is the most important base. To attain the Path and Fruit of Nibbana, a person must practice meditation by bringing his mind to rest absolutely still at the seventh base.



3.3) How Our Mind Works

The Most Venerable Phrabhavanaviriyakhun, the Vice-Abbot of Wat Phra Dhammakaya, has elaborated on Luang Pu's teaching about the working mechanism of our mind. Our mind works in four different steps. These include perception, sensory registration, central processing, and cognition.

When our eyes see a form, the nerves in our eyes send their signals to our mind. Our mind acknowledges their signals. This is called seeing.

When our ears hear a sound, the nerves in our ears send their signals to our mind. Our mind acknowledges their signals. This is called hearing.

When our nose smells something, the nerves in our nose send their signals to our mind. Our mind acknowledges their signals. This is called smelling.

When our tongue tastes something, the nerves in our tongue send their signals to our mind. Our mind acknowledges their signals. This is called tasting.

When something touches our body, the nerves in our body send their signals to our mind. Our mind acknowledges their signals. This is called the sense of touch.

The first step to the way our mind works is acknowledgement. This step occurs in the outermost part of the mind. What is amazing, however, is the fact that whenever the nerves in our body send their signals to our mind, our mind acknowledges the signals as an image. This means that sound is transformed into an image; and so are smell, taste, and touch. This phenomenon can be compared to the carrier wave which carries the voice and video information from the television tower to the television set. The television set separates the video from the voice. It then sends the video to the screen and the voice to the speaker. In the same manner, corporeality, taste, smell, sound, touch, and every mind-object are all transformed into images. It is for this reason that Luang Pu used the word “see” instead of the word “acknowledge”.

Once the first layer of the mind acknowledges the information, it forwards the information to the second and deeper layer. This second layer is lighter, airier, more spacious, and more refined than the first layer. It does the work of saving all the data in images in the same way that a video camera records images. This recording is called sensory registration and it enables us to remember things.

Having saved all of the received data, the second layer forwards the data to the third layer. This third layer does the work of thinking about and analyzing the received data.

Having thought about and analyzed the received data, the third layer forwards the data to the fourth layer. This fourth layer is lighter, airier, more spacious, and more refined than the first three layers. It does the work of making decisions and summarizing the received data. This is called cognition.

3.2 The Round of Rebirth

3.2.1 Samsara

The term “Samsara” means the round of rebirth.²⁷ Other terms have also been used. These include Vattasamsara, Samsaradukkha, Samsaracakra. These terms imply that human beings and other living beings do not live just once; therefore, death is not our final end. However, all living beings must undergo the round of rebirth indefinitely as long as they still possess defilements, Kamma, and the fruits of Kamma. The Lord Buddha says that the beginning and the end of the round of rebirth cannot be determined. It means that no one can tell when all the living beings started to undergo the round of rebirth and when the round of rebirth will end.

On one occasion, while our Lord Buddha was staying at Vultures Peak in the city of Rajagarh, He said to the venerable monks that the beginning and the end of the round of rebirth cannot be determined. When a person has undergone the round of rebirth for an entire Kappa²⁸, he will have accumulated a pile of bones as big as this Vepulla Mountain²⁹... This mountain is located not too far from Vultures Peak.

In the Assu Sutta, the Lord Buddha said, “Behold monks, the beginning and the end of the round of rebirth cannot be determined... The amount of tears you have shed in all your rebirths is greater than the water in the four oceans... You have experienced the death of your mother, father, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters... You have shed tears for having been parted from your loved ones in an amount that is no less than all the water in the four oceans.³⁰ In addition, the Lord Buddha says that it is very difficult to find anyone that has never been at one time or another, our parent, our sibling, our child, our spouse, etc.³¹

Our Lord Buddha had also undergone the round of rebirth for countless existences and had been separated from loved ones for countless times. On one occasion, our Lord Buddha went on his alms-round in the town of Saketa, a Brahmin saw the Most Exalted One and came immediately to prostrate himself at His feet. He held on tight to the Lord Buddha’s ankles and said, “Dear one, isn’t it the practice that a son should take care of his parents in their old age?” He then led the Most Exalted One to his house.

²⁷ **The Royal Institute Dictionary Online**, B.E. 2525

²⁸ **A Kappa** is a unit of time which is unimaginably long. An analogy can be used to describe this incredibly long period of time. Suppose there is a solid mountain which is 16 kilometers wide, 16 kilometers long, and 16 kilometers high, every 100 years, it is smoothed over by a very fine cloth. The length of time it takes to level this mountain to the ground is still shorter than a Kappa.

²⁹ *Suttantapiṭaka Samyuttanikāya Nidānvagga. Puggala Sutta*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 26, no. 440-441, p. 557

³⁰ *Suttantapiṭaka Samyuttanikāya Nidānvagga. Assu Sutta*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 26, no. 425-426, p. 509-511

³¹ *Suttantapiṭaka Samyuttanikāya Nidānvagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 26, no. 550-555, p. 529

Dhammapadaṭṭhakāthā Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Gāthā-Dhammapada. vol. 42, p. 57

As the Lord Buddha and the accompanying monks were sitting on the appointed seats, the Brahmini, the wife of the Brahmin, had heard that their son had returned home. She went to prostrate herself at the Lord Buddha's feet, started crying, and said, "Dear one, where have you been all this time? Isn't it the practice that a son should take care of his parents in their old age?" She then told her sons and daughters to pay respect to their older brother. The Brahmin and Brahmini were so happy that they made a very generous alms-offering to the Most Exalted One and the company of monks. After the meal, the Lord Buddha gave the old couple a Dhamma lecture called the Jara Sutta. At the end of the lecture, the couple attained Ariyahood and became Anagamis.

After the Lord Buddha and the venerable monks returned to the temple, the monks were conversing among themselves in the Dhamma Hall. They were saying that the Brahmin and Brahmini knew very well that the Most Exalted One's parents were King Suddhodana and Queen Sirimamahaya, yet they kept calling Him "our son". The venerable monks could not help but wonder why that was.

The Lord Buddha explained the situation to them, "The Brahmin and Brahmini called me their son because they had been my parents for a total of 500 consecutive lifetimes. They had been my uncle and aunt for a total of 500 consecutive lifetimes. And they had been my grandparents for a total of 500 consecutive lifetimes."³²

Surely we have all had the experience that a certain person seems very familiar to us even though we have just met the person for the first time. There are many couples that at their first meeting knew that they were meant for each other. This situation also applies to our pets, our team members at work, etc. The reason for this situation comes from the fact that we have all undergone the round of rebirth for countless lifetimes and during these countless lifetimes we have been related to countless individuals. And when we meet up again with some of these individuals in this lifetime, we feel as though we have always known them.

3.2.2 Evidence of the Round of Rebirth

How can we believe that the round of rebirth exists? One key evidence of the existence of the round of rebirth is found in the case of people who can recall their previous life. Examples of such evidence can be found in the Tripitaka as well as in the present days. Incidents of past-life recalls may not be as common but there are certainly enough of them to amaze us. In this Information Age, news of such incidents can be spread globally within seconds. If the student searches the Internet using the word "reincarnation", 4,590,000 entries will be found. In the "YouTube" website, more than 100 reincarnation stories can be found.

³² *Jātakatṭhakathā Aṭṭhakathā-sāket-Jataka Ekanipāṭa*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 56, no. 68, p. 159-161

On Tuesday, March 5, 2552 B.E., a TV program in Thailand called “Teesip” presented examples of people who could recall their past life. One of these people is Mr. Chanai Choomalaiwong. He was born in 2510 B.E. in Pijit Province and was 41 years old as of 2551 B.E. He said that he could recall his past life since he was just three years old. He said that in his previous life he was a teacher by the name of “Buakai Lornag”. He taught at Tahbor School in Taparnhin Amphoe in Pijit Province. His wife’s name was “Suan”. He and his wife had five children altogether, three girls and two boys. Mr. Buakai died at the age of 35 in 2505 B.E. from a gunshot wound. He was shot while he was on his way to teach school.

The boy Chanai could recall his previous life when he was three years old and insisted that his grandmother took him to see his former family because he really missed them. But the grandmother never paid him any attention. Eventually, the little boy went to look up his former family by himself. The amazing thing was that he could find his way to Mrs. Suan’s house even though he had never made the trip before in this lifetime.

When the little boy reached his former family’s house, he shocked everyone in the Lornag family by being able to greet everyone by their names. Family and friends were amazed but they found it difficult to believe that the little boy could really recall his past life. Therefore, Mr. Buakai’s parents, wife, and children posed some questions to the little boy about things that only the family members knew about. The little boy could answer every question readily. He recognized the things that belonged to Mr. Buakai. He knew where Mr. Buakai used to keep his personal things, what his daughter liked to eat, etc. Finally the Lornag family felt confident that the little boy was indeed Mr. Buakai in his previous life.

Detailed examples of past-life recall such as this attest to the fact that death is not the final end and the hereafter does exist. A person’s hereafter may be rebirth in the Human Realm or in other realms of existence such as the Hell Realm, the Celestial Realm, etc. Rebirth in a particular realm of existence is dictated by the individual’s accumulated merit and demerit.

3.2.3 Tivatta is the Cause of Rebirth

Tivatta means the three cycles. It means the three causes of the round of rebirth and they include defilements, Kamma, and the fruits of Kamma. In other words, defilements in our mind cause us to perform Kamma or action, and our Kamma incurs the fruits of Kamma, the result of which is the round of rebirth.

Details about Tivatta appear in different Suttas such as the Pathvi Sutta. It was written, “The beginning and the end of the round of rebirth cannot be determined. When living beings are still blocked by “Avijja” or ignorance and possess “Tanha” or craving, they must still undergo the round of rebirth the beginning of which is not known.”

In the Angulimala Sutta, the Arahāt Angulimala said, “Previously I was a villain called Angulimala. I had been swept away by the strong current of defilements. I had killed many people, the retribution for which is rebirth in the States of Unhappiness.”³³

It can be summarized that defilements, which include Avijjā or ignorance, Tanhā or craving, etc., cause us to perform Kamma. In the case of the villain Angulimala, he had committed misdeeds by killing 999 people, the retribution for which was rebirth in the States of Unhappiness.

Angulimala’s misdeeds would have incurred countless rebirths in the Hell Realm normally. But given the fact that he had ordained as a monk and been able to attain Arahātship, he was emancipated from the round of rebirth and would never have to reap the fruits of his misdeeds in the States of Unhappiness. Even then his past misdeeds did incur retribution in this lifetime in that he had been stoned by some villagers until his head was all bloody.³⁴

1. The Meaning and the Families of Defilements

Defilements mean things that make our mind gloomy. The Lord Buddha says, “Behold monks, the mind was clear and bright but it became gloomy as a result of defilements.”³⁵ Here, the Lord Buddha uses the Pali term, “Upakilesa” for defilements. This term is made up of two words, namely, Upa and Kilesa. Upa means entering whereas Kilesa means defilements. Therefore, Upakilesa means the entering of defilements into the mind to make it gloomy.

Another term which is used often to mean defilements is “Asava”. This term means to flow and it denotes the condition whereby all living beings that still possess defilements must continue to undergo suffering in the round of rebirth. It also denotes the condition whereby defilements have been fermenting and pickling in our mind for a very long time.³⁶

Therefore, defilements are foreign matters which take up residence in our mind and cause it to be gloomy. In other words, the mind becomes marred as a result of defilements. Defilements in our mind are like germs in our body. Certain germs lived in our body when we were still in our mother’s womb. Likewise, defilements were in our mind when we were still in our mother’s womb. If one is to question where defilements come from or where germs come from, the best middle of the way answer will be defilements or germs

³³ *Suttantapiṭaka Majjhimanikāya Majjhimaṇṇāsa. Angulimala Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 21, no. 534, p. 152

³⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 533, p. 150

³⁵ *Suttantapiṭaka Aṅguttaranikāya Ekanipāta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 32, no. 50, p. 95

³⁶ *Manorothpuranī Aṭṭhakathā-aṅguttaranikāya Tikanipāta. Aṭṭhakathā-apaṇṇaka-Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 34, p. 49-50

have always been with us. They may be said to be like the things which exist in nature such as trees, sky, mountains, waterfalls, etc.

Defilements can be divided into so many different types but on the whole they can be divided into three large families called greed (Lobha), anger (Dosa), and ignorance (Moha).

(1) The Lobha Family

The word “Lobha” means desire, craving, and want.³⁷ This family of defilements causes the mind to be hungry and to crave other people’s possessions. In spite of being very wealthy, a person dominated by Lobha is still hungry for more wealth. His mind does not know the meaning of being full or having enough in the same way that a fire can never get enough fuel and an ocean can never get enough water.

Other names of this family of defilements include “Raga” which means by the power of gladness, “Nandi” which means by the power of enjoyment, and “Tanha” which means by the power of craving.³⁸

(2) The Dosa Family

The word “Dosa” means anger, feeling offended, resentment, revenge, burst of anger, thoughts of injuring others, thoughts of killing others, ferocity, harboring a grudge, a foul mouth, and the lack of joy.³⁹ Dosa causes the mind to hot up, to want to destroy, to want to cause damage to things and people. This family of defilement causes the mind to boil over.

(3) The Moha Family

The word “Moha” means ignorance. It arises out of the power of delusion and misguidedness.⁴⁰ Moha includes ignorance of the truth, the lack of penetrating power, the lack of reflection, a low level of intelligence, stupidity, the lack of penetrating knowledge, delusion, the lack of knowledge about suffering, the lack of knowledge about the cause of suffering, the lack of knowledge about the cessation of suffering, the lack of knowledge about the path leading to the cessation of suffering, Avijja or ignorance.⁴¹

³⁷ *Sārathapakathāsiniñ Aṭṭhakathā-samyuttanikāya Sagāthavagga. Aṭṭhakathā-catucakkha-Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 24, p. 147

³⁸ *Sārathapakathāsiniñ Aṭṭhakathā-samyuttanikāya Nidānavagga. Aṭṭhakathā-atthirāga-Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 26, p. 330

³⁹ *Abidhammapiṭaka Dhammasaṅghni.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 76, no. 691, p. 385-386

⁴⁰ *Sārathapakathāsiniñ Aṭṭhakathā-samyuttanikāya Sahāyatanavagga.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 28, p. 488

⁴¹ *Abidhammapiṭaka Dhammasaṅghni.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 76, no. 691, p. 385-386

“Moha” has the same meaning as “Avijja” in the sense that Avijja is the root of all defilements. The Lord Buddha says, “When a person can abandon anger... and greed, and can uproot craving along with Avijja which is the root of all defilements, that person can escape from suffering.”⁴²

2. The Meaning and Types of Kamma

Kamma means an intentional act. The Lord Buddha says, “Behold, monks, I say that intention is Kamma. A person first thinks about something and then acts it out through his body, word, and mind.”

It is because one must first think about something before acting on it that makes one’s intention the most important component of an action.

Kamma can be performed through the body, the word, and the mind. Kamma can be divided into wholesome Kamma and unwholesome Kamma. Wholesome Kamma, when accumulated to the fullest extent will lead one to be emancipated from Tivatta and Samsara. Unwholesome Kamma causes human beings and other living beings to continue to undergo the round of rebirth indefinitely.

(1) Wholesome Kamma: Wholesome Kamma means good deeds. These are the deeds which are performed with Alobha, Adosa, and Amoha. Good deeds are devoid of greed, anger, and ignorance. Therefore, good deeds are harmless; therefore, they do not cause trouble for oneself or others now or later. Good deeds make one’s mind joyful, cheerful and happy.

The means to wholesome deeds is called “The Tenfold Wholesome Course of Action”, and they are performed through the body, the word, and the mind.

- **Kayasucarita (right conduct through the body):** It means performing good deeds with the body in three different ways. These include Panatipata veramani or abstaining from killing, Adinnadana veramani or abstaining from stealing, and Kamesumicchacara veramani or abstaining from sexual misconduct.

- **Vacisucarita (right conduct through the word):** It means performing good deeds with one’s words in four different ways. These include Musavada veramani or abstaining from false speech, Pisunaya vacaya veramani or abstaining from divisive speech, Pharusaya vacaya veramani or abstaining from offensive speech, and Samphappalapa veramani or abstaining from nonsensical speech.

⁴² *Suttantapiṭaka Samyuttanikāya Sagāthavagga. Nandivisala Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 24, no. 302, p. 386

- **Manosucarita (right conduct through the mind):** It means performing good deeds with the mind in three different ways. These include Anabhijjha or the absence of covetousness, Abyabada or not thinking about exploiting or harming others, and Sammaditthi or having Right View.

The Tenfold Wholesome Course of Action is also called Manussadhamma⁴³ which means basic human virtues. Any human being, who does not practice the Tenfold Wholesome Course of Action, can be said to be an incomplete human being. Deeds that violate basic human virtues include killing, stealing, promiscuousness, etc. And anyone, who is an incomplete human being, will have to spend his hereafter in the Hell Realm. After the sentence in the Hell Realm has been served, he will have to undergo subsequent rebirths as different kinds of animals. He will not be able to be reborn in the Human Realm just yet because as a human being, he does not practice Manussadhamma.

Ways of Making Merit:

Another Dhamma topic, which has to do with wholesome deeds, is called “Ways of Making Merit” especially “The Three Ways of Making Merit”.⁴⁴ These include Danamaya or alms-giving, Silamaya or keeping the Precepts, and Bhavanamaya or meditation practice.

Danamaya means accumulating merit by giving alms such as offering food and other requisites to venerable monks, etc. Danamaya also includes forgiveness, giving secular knowledge, giving Dhamma knowledge.

Silamaya means accumulating merit by keeping the Precepts such as the Five Precepts. These include no killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct, no lying, and no addictive substances. Silamaya also includes the Eight Precepts and the Precepts observed by the monks and novice monks.

Bhavanamaya means accumulating merit by practicing meditation. The word “Bhavana” means “to thrive”;⁴⁵ that is, “to thrive in meditation”.⁴⁶

These two topics about wholesome deeds, namely, the Tenfold Wholesome Course of Action and Ways of Making Merit are synergistic in the following ways.

⁴³ *Papañcasudhanī Aṭṭhakathā-Majjhimanikāya Mūlapaṇṇāsa. Aṭṭhakathā-mahasāhanād Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 18, p. 67

Manorothpuranī Aṭṭhakathā Aṅguttaranikāya Ekanipāta. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 18, p. 67

⁴⁴ *Suttantapiṭaka Dīgha-nikāya Pāṭikavagga.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol.16, no. 228, p.172

⁴⁵ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Paṭisambhidāmagga.* Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Press, vol. 31, no. 2, p. 414

⁴⁶ *Saddhammapakāsinī Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Paṭisambhidāmagga.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol.68, p.48

Kayasucarita and Vacisucarita are synergistic with Dana and Sila. Sila is considered a type of Dana because when we abstain from killing, we are essentially keeping safe the life of other beings. When we abstain from stealing, we are essentially keeping other people's possessions safe. When we abstain from sexual misconduct, we are essentially keeping other people's spouses safe. So on and so forth. Moreover, a person that gives alms regularly is generous by nature and will not think of stealing from others. These are the reasons that alms-giving supports the keeping of the Precepts.

However, the ways of making merit also includes the offering of alms such as requisites to venerable monks, etc.

Manosucarita is synergistic with "Bhavana" because the aim of Bhavana or meditation is the removal of defilements.

Most importantly, the enemy of Lobha or greed is Dana or alms-giving, the enemy of Dosa is Sila or Precepts, and the enemy of Moha or ignorance is Bhavana or meditation practice. Therefore, if we give alms, keep the Precepts, and practice meditation regularly, it means that we are gradually scrubbing our mind clean of the three families of defilements: Lobha, Dosa, and Moha.

(2) Unwholesome Kamma: Unwholesome Kamma means bad deeds. These are deeds, which are performed with Lobha, Dosa, and Moha. Such misdeeds cause harm and trouble for oneself and others. Pain and suffering are the results of bad deeds.

The means to unwholesome Kamma is called "The Tenfold Unwholesome Course of Action". Unwholesome deeds are performed through the body, the word, and the mind.

- **Kayaducarita:** It means committing misdeeds with the body in three different ways. These include Panatipata or intentional killing, Adinnadana or intentional stealing, and Kamesumicchacara or intentional sexual misconduct.

- **Vaciducarita:** It means committing misdeeds with one's words in four different ways. These include Musavada or intentional lying, Pisunayavaca or the intentional use of divisive speech, Pharusavaca or the intentional use of offensive speech, Samphappalapa or the intentional use of nonsensical speech.

- **Manoducarita:** It means committing misdeeds with the mind in three different ways. These include Abhijjha or covetousness, Byabada or harboring thoughts of harming or exploiting others, and Micchaditthi or having Wrong View.

3. The Meaning and Types of Vipaka

The word “Vipaka” means result. Here, Vipaka means the fruits of Kamma.

The fruits of Kamma have two levels. Firstly, our Kamma results in either merit or demerit in that when we perform a wholesome deed, it results in merit but when we perform an unwholesome deed, it results in demerit. Secondly, our accumulated merit and demerit yield their respective fruits by dictating the course of our life.

Where are merit and demerit stored? Luang Pu Wat Paknam said, “Merit or demerit is stored in the middle of the Dhamma Sphere, which gives rise to our physical body. This Dhamma Sphere or Manussadham Sphere is a clear and pure sphere the size of a chicken egg yolk. This Dhamma Sphere is located at the center of the sixth base inside our body at the navel level. This Dhamma Sphere is therefore the place where our accumulated merit and demerit are stored. Its storage capacity is infinite.”⁴⁷

(1) The Meaning of Merit

Merit works by cleansing our overall Kamma. Merit leads us to a desirable realm of existence.⁴⁸ In other words, merit works to cleanse our mind of demerit which resulted from unwholesome deeds. A desirable realm of existence means the States of Happiness which include the Celestial Realm, etc.

In addition, merit determines our lineage, the level of our corporeal endowments, the level of our material wealth, and the level of our power and authority.⁴⁹ In other words, our accumulated merit, which resulted from wholesome deeds, works to cause us to be born in a good family, complete with corporeality endowments, material wealth, position and power. Only a person possessing a vast amount of merit can become the leader of a nation or the leader of the entire world.

Luang Pu Wat Paknam said that merit has the form of a clear and bright sphere.

Merit is made up of a refined element which is called “Bunnadhatu”. Bunnadhatu is not visible to the physical eyes. It is only when we have practiced meditation to the point where our mind is as refined as “Bunnadhatu” that we can see it. Nonetheless, merit exists even though we cannot see it with our physical eyes. It is not unlike electricity and germs which exist even though we cannot see them with our physical eyes.

⁴⁷ Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro), **The 69th Dhamma Lecture**, Part 6 on *Sangahavatthu* or The Four Principles of Service and Social Integration and Part 32 on *the Ratana Sutta*, B.E.2538, p. 96-97, 385-386

⁴⁸ *Sammohavinodhanī Aṭṭhakathā-Phravibhaṅg*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol.77, p.466

⁴⁹ *Madhurattavilāsini Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Buddhavong*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol.73, p.167

Merit can also be defined as “a pure energy, which arises in our mind each time we decide not to do a bad deed, say a bad word or think a bad thought but decide instead to do a good deed, say a good word, or think a good thought. Good deeds include alms-giving, Precepts observation, and meditation practice”.⁵⁰

Actually, energy and Dhatu is one and the same thing in that energy is the most refined component of Dhatu or matter. This is shown in the equation $E = mc^2$ which states that matter and energy is one and the same thing and can be converted from one form to another. (E = energy, m = mass, and c = the speed of light)

In summary, merit is pure Dhatu or pure energy. It has a refined nature and appears as a clear and bright sphere. Merit results from the performance of such good deeds as alms-giving, Precepts observation, meditation practice, etc. Merit works by gradually cleansing our mind of defilements. As we accumulate more and more merit, the merit earned will continue to cleanse our mind of defilements until eventually they can be completely removed. In addition, merit can bless us with happiness and success. After we die, it can lead us to rebirth in the States of Happiness.

There is another quality which is connected to merit. It is called “Parami. The word “Parami” comes from the word “Parama” which means “ultimate” as in ultimate goodness. Essentially, “Parami” is merit but in a much more concentrated form. In other words, once the amount of merit we accumulate each day becomes great enough, it will condense into “Parami”. Luang Pu Wat Paknam said, “Parami has the form of a sphere. Once the Merit Sphere grows to be 25 centimeters in diameter, it will automatically condense into the Parami Sphere which is one inch or 2.54 centimeters in diameter.”⁵¹

(2) The Meaning of Demerit

The word demerit comes from the Pali word “Papan”. According to the Commentary, demerit means filth. Demerit is gloominess because it causes the mind which used to be pure, clean, clear, and bright to become gloomy. The fruit of demerit is pure suffering. The endless cycle of birth, aging, and death is brought about by demerit.⁵²

According to Luang Pu Wat Paknam, demerit has the form of a sphere⁵³ just like the Merit Sphere except that it is murky, not clear like the Merit Sphere. The level of murkiness depends on the kind and gravity of the misdeeds committed. Like the Merit Sphere, the Demerit Sphere is also located inside the Dhamma Sphere. Merit Spheres and Demerit Spheres are stacked in an alternate manner inside the Dhamma Sphere. This

⁵⁰ Phrabhavanaviriyakhun. **Cheevitneemeewaitoomdermpun**, B.E. 2550, p. 16-19

⁵¹ Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro), **The 69th Dhamma Lecture**, Part 52 on Rare Things, B.E. 2538, p. 608-609

⁵² *Paramatthadīpanī Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Itivuttaka. Aṭṭhakathā-desanā Sutta Part 6*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol.45, p.282-283

⁵³ Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro), **The 69th Dhamma Lecture**, Part 25 on Keṇīyanumodanagāthā, p. 299

arrangement is caused by the fact that each day, people perform a mixture of good and bad deeds.

(3) How Merit and Demerit Yield their Fruits

Merit and demerit, which result from our overall Kamma, follow us like a shadow throughout all of our existences to dictate our life condition in each and every existence. It is the fact that each person's overall Kamma is uniquely different that makes each person's life uniquely different. These differences show up in the body, in the face, in the aging process, complexion, success, material wealth, the level of happiness and unhappiness, etc.

For a person who has committed a lot of misdeeds, his accumulated demerit will make his mind gloomy especially just before he dies. And he will spend his hereafter in the State of Loss and Woe which includes the Hell Realm, the Peta Realm, the Asurakaya Realm, and the Animal Realm. The pain and suffering in the State of Loss and Woe is horrific and lasts an unimaginably long time. When he is finally reborn in the Human Realm, traces of his remaining demerit will cause him to be crippled, blind, deaf, mute, retarded, etc.

A person who has performed a lot of good deeds, his accumulated merit will make his mind clear and bright especially just before he dies. And he will spend his hereafter in the Celestial Realm or the Brahma Realm. Inhabitants of the Celestial Realm and the Brahma Realm differ in terms of material wealth, personal radiance, complexion, power, longevity, etc. Once he ceases to be from the Celestial Realm or the Brahma Realm, he will be reborn in another realm of existence. His next realm of existence will be determined by his overall Kamma. He may be reborn in the Human Realm, in the Animal Realm, etc., depending on whether his accumulated merit or demerit yields its fruit first.

Avijja or ignorance causes us to be ignorant of the fact that we have undergone the round of rebirth for countless times. Avijja causes us to forget how we have had to pay for the ill consequences of our Lobha or greed, Dosa or anger, and Moha or ignorance. When we first opened our eyes here on earth, we were already fooled into believing that we were here for the first and only time. Therefore, we feel the need to hurry and accumulate everything we can while we can. We feel that we need to look out for number one all the time.

Whether we like it or not, whether we want to or not, humanity is playing the game of life without realizing how highly complex and full of strict rules the game is and how there is every form and every level of reward and punishment.

Our ignorance of the fact that wholesome deeds lead to happiness and unwholesome deeds lead to unhappiness makes us perform a mixture of good and bad deeds in response to the circumstances we find our self in. We are like an innocent child who puts a nail into an electrical outlet without knowing the great danger awaiting us.⁵⁴

More details about how merit and demerit yield their fruits can be found in chapter 6 under 6.7: The Law of Kamma as taught in Buddhism. However, the student can learn more about this subject in the course the Law of Kamma.

Brief mentions of the different realms of existence are presented next but greater details can be found in the courses “Buddhist Cosmology” and “The Hereafter”.

3.2.4 Cakkavala and the Different Realms of Existence

One of the challenging quests for scientists is the search for answers about Cakkavala or in secular terms, the universe and the galaxies. Astronomers know that the universe contains a large number of stars, and it is made up of a large number of galaxies. Our own galaxy is called “The Milky Way”. Currently, astronomers are working hard to find out if out of the millions of planets out there, there may be one that is like our earth.

More recently, on March 7, B.E. 2552, NASA has sent the Kepler Space Telescope which costs more than 20,000 million bahts to search for inhabitable planets outside the solar system. The aim is to find out if we are all alone or if there are other beings living in other planets in other parts of the universe.⁵⁵ The entire world seems to be waiting to see if the Kepler Space Telescope will find any life elsewhere in the universe.

However, the Lord Buddha told us over 2,500 years ago that there are countless worlds just like ours and all of them are inhabited by human beings just like us. The Lord Buddha says that there are countless number of Cakkavala or galaxies out there. He says that there are an infinite number of galaxies and He uses the term “Anantacakkavala” to describe this reality. In each Cakkavala or galaxy, there are many different realms of existence inhabited by multitudes of different life-forms. There are human beings as well as other living beings. These include celestial beings, Brahma beings, Peta, Asurakaya, and hell beings. In each Cakkavala or galaxy, there are altogether 2,004 worlds which are inhabited by human beings.

⁵⁴ Dunktarin. **Siadaikontaimaidaiarn**, B.E. 2548, p. 122-123

⁵⁵ “The Kepler Space Telescope, Searching for Inhabitable Planets,” **Online Newspaper**, B.E. 2552

1. Components of Cakkavala

Each Cakkavala or galaxy is composed of three components namely Nibbana, the Three Spheres of Existence, and Lokantanaraka.

1.1 Nibbana: It is the abode of individuals who are devoid of defilements; and therefore, emancipated from the round of rebirth. Its full name is “Ayatananibbana”. After our Lord Gautama Buddha’s passing, He went to live in Ayatananibbana along with all the Arahats.

1.2 The Three Spheres of Existence: These are the abodes of individuals who still possess defilements and must continue to undergo the round of rebirth. These abodes include The Sense Sphere, the Form Sphere, and the Non-Form Sphere.

The Sense Sphere is made up of eleven realms of existence. These are the realms of existence for individuals who are still attached to sense-desire. They include one human realm, the four states of loss and woe, and the six celestial realms.

The Human Realm includes the four human worlds. These are Pubbavideha, Aparagoyana, Uttarakuru, and Jombu. Our human world is called Jombu. In addition, there are 2,000 smaller worlds that are also inhabited by human beings.

The four states of loss and woe are the lowest realms of existence. They are devoid of growth and they include the Hell Realm, the Peta Realm, the Asurakaya Realm, and the Animal Realm.

The six celestial realms are the abodes of celestial beings. They include the first celestial realm of Catumaharajika, the second celestial realm of Tavatimsa, the third celestial realm of Yama, the fourth celestial realm of Tusita, the fifth celestial realm of Nimmanarati, and the sixth celestial realm of Paranimmitavasavatti.

The Form Sphere is the abode of Form Brahma Beings. There are altogether sixteen Form Brahma realms. They are located above the Celestial Realm and the celestial wealth in the Form Brahma Realm is more stupendous and more exquisite than that of the Celestial Realm.

The Non-Form Sphere is the abode of Non-Form Brahma Beings. There are altogether four Non-Form Brahma realms. They are located above the Form Brahma Realm and the celestial wealth there is more stupendous and more exquisite than that of the Form Brahma Realm.

1.3 Lokantanaraka: It is the abode of individuals who still possess defilements. Inhabitants of this realm of existence are individuals that harbor extreme Wrong View and possess such a very high level of demerit that they cannot be housed within the eight sites of the Hell Realm of Mahanarok. These are individuals who committed such atrocities as killing a large number of Arahats, killing a large number of monks who practice righteousness, destroying Buddhism.

2. The Structure of Cakkavala

Ayatananibbana, the Three Spheres, and Lokantanaraka are situated in such a way that they are aligned with each other vertically with Ayatananibbana at the very topmost, the Three Spheres in the middle, and Lokantanaraka at the very bottom.

The Three Spheres are also in alignment with each other with the Non-Form Sphere at the topmost and also the largest. The Form Sphere is in the middle. It is smaller than the Non-Form Sphere. The Sense Sphere is the smallest and is at the very bottom.

The structure of the Sense Sphere is like the Milky Way in that it looks like the shell of a snail. According to Buddhism, the great Mountain called Sineru lies at the center of the Milky Way. This mountain is made up of refined elements; therefore, it is invisible to the physical eyes.

In space and at the four cardinal points around the Sineru Mountain lie the four human worlds of Jombu, Pubbavideha, Aparagoyana, and Uttarakuru. Jombu is the name of our human world and it lies to the south of the Sineru Mountain. The smaller human worlds numbering 2,000 are located in space around the four large human worlds in that each large human world is surrounded by 500 smaller worlds. However, all these other human worlds are at such a very great distance from our world that they have not yet been discovered by astronomers.

Above the great Sineru Mountain is the location of the six celestial realms. Above the Celestial Realm are the Form Brahma Realm and the Non-Form Brahma Realm respectively. Below the Sineru Mountain are the Peta Realm, the Asurakaya Realm, and the eight sites of the Hell Realm. All of these realms are made up of refined elements; therefore, they cannot be seen by the physical eyes. However, the Animal Realm is located in the Human Realm because animals and human beings share the same abode.

The round of rebirth has been compared to a gigantic prison whereas each realm of existence has been compared to a huge prison cell. There are prison cells for individuals who have committed major offences as well as prison cells for individuals who have committed minor offences. These so-called prison cells differ in one major way from the prison cells on earth in that whichever prison cell an individual was born into, that is the end of the story. No appeal can be made. And the individual must remain there until the sentence has been served.

The round of rebirth is a prison which needs no prison guards to keep the prisoners from escaping. After an individual leaves one prison cell, he will end up in another; and there are no exits from this prison. Unfortunately, most of the prisoners of the round of rebirth have no idea that they are being imprisoned. A very few people may have some idea but they do not know how to escape from it. The majority of living beings are too busy being trapped by the lure inside the prison in the form of Kamaguna-5 or the five sensual pleasures to know any better. Once in a great while, a Perfect Man is born to seek and find the way out of the round of rebirth. Having found the Way, He works to help others escape as well. Even then each Perfect Man can only take a tiny number of living beings out of the round of rebirth with Him.⁵⁶

3.2.5 Proving the Reality of Cakkavala and the Different Realms of Existence

The knowledge contained in the Tripitaka can be divided into two groups: knowledge in the coarse category and knowledge in the refined category. Knowledge in the coarse category includes basic knowledge which everyone can learn, prove to himself, and see immediate results. This includes the Five Precepts. When a person keeps the Five Precepts, he can begin to live happily because he does not have to worry about being arrested for stealing, being caught at lying or being reckless as a result of alcohol consumption.

Knowledge in the refined category includes details about the Hell Realm, the Celestial Realm, the Peta Realm, Nibbana, etc., or the teaching that we are wealthy in this lifetime because we had accumulated a lot of merit by offering alms to the field of merit in our previous existence(s). Individuals who are poor in this lifetime result from the fact that they scarcely gave alms in their previous existence(s). These are but some examples of knowledge in the refined category. However, these examples are difficult to prove and most people disbelieve them. Moreover, most scientists do not believe in other realms of existence, since they cannot prove their existence.

It is true that these refined realms of existence cannot be proven using scientific means. However, they can be proven using the Buddhist means. This Buddhist means is called the mind.

Our scientists rely on the five sense-faculties to conduct their experiments to prove if something exists. These include the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. Main-stream scientists do not accept the sixth sense-faculty, which is the mind. However, Buddhism not only accepts the mind but also deems it as being the most important faculty. According to Buddhist teachings, the mind is not part of the brain but it is a separate and independent entity altogether.

⁵⁶ Dunktarin. *Siadaikontaimaidaiarn*, B.E. 2548, p. 165

We employ certain sense-faculties in order to prove that something exists. For example, we use the eye to validate a physical form. We use the ear to validate a sound. We use the nose to validate a smell. We use the tongue to validate taste. We use the body to feel softness or hardness. However, we cannot use the ear, nose, tongue, and body to verify if a certain picture is beautiful or not. In this case, only the eye can do the job. Likewise, we cannot use the eye, nose, tongue, and body to verify if a particular song is melodious or not. In this case, only the ear can do the job. As a matter of fact, the five sense-faculties cannot work independently without the cooperation of the sixth sense-faculty which is the mind.

Most importantly, the mind can employ itself to validate the reality of everything especially things that are of a refined nature such as the Hell Realm, the Celestial Realm, Nibbana, Lokantanaraka, etc. Moreover, entities having a refined nature cannot be proven by using the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body. In this case, only the mind can do the job. If people all over the world are willing to accept the mind as a valid sense-faculty and can be used to prove the existence of things that are of a refined nature, they can then decide to train their mind by practicing meditation. Once they have practiced meditation to the point that they can achieve the prescribed elevated meditative attainments, they too will be able to gain access to the reality of these refined realms of existence as recorded in the Tripitaka.

But if we continue to refuse the use of our mind as a valid and most important sense-faculty, we will be denying countless experiences because matters of the mind such as love, anger, fear, cannot be validated by the other five sense-faculties. When we are in love, we feel it in our mind. When we are angry or afraid, we also feel it in our mind. Scientists confuse the brain with the mind and try to measure brainwaves in order to find out what the mind is doing. In other words, scientists have been trying to validate matters of the mind by using the five sense-faculties. This is obviously the wrong approach.

One famous scientist called Eddington made a statement to the effect that science has flaws and its truth-finding methodology is also flawed. Therefore, science can only prove the shadow of truth but not truth itself.

The scientific community has the opinion that religion in general is about beliefs and not about knowledge or reality because its teachings cannot be scientifically proven. Actually, as far as the general public is concerned, scientific knowledge is a matter of beliefs because most people do not conduct the experiments themselves. The general public believes whatever the scientific community tells them. For example, people believe that germs cause diseases because they learn it from scientific findings but very few people think to investigate different germs themselves by using a microscope. Scientists tell us that water is made up of two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen but most people have never actually seen what the water molecule looks like.

Moreover, scientific experiments and scientific findings are in the hands of specialists. They are not accessible to the general public. These specialists must be highly trained in their fields and must have knowledge of for example high level mathematics. Einstein labored to study high level mathematics in order to explain his relativity theory. Therefore, it is not surprising that at the time when he revealed his relativity theory, there were only twelve people in the entire world who could understand it. This theory is now almost 100 years old but to most people the theory remains just a belief.

It can be said that such scientific findings as germs, water molecules, or the relativity theory are on the same footing as the knowledge about heaven and hell in Buddhism in that both can be proven but very few people bother to prove it to themselves.

3.2.6 Suffering in the Round of Rebirth and the Ultimate Refuge

As stated earlier, the round of rebirth is full of suffering. However, some people are very optimistic and are of the opinion that they live a happy life. In reality, true happiness does not exist for ordinary people. What most people think of as happiness is merely the feeling of ease when suffering has been temporarily assuaged. For example, we say that we feel happy after a good meal. Actually, we feel relieved from hunger after we have had a meal, the happiness we refer to is merely the feeling of ease derived from the feeling of being full. Soon enough, however, we will feel hungry and will need to eat again. From birth until death, no one, however rich he may be, has yet been able to overcome their hunger pang.⁵⁷

It is for these reasons that everything we have is not there to provide us with happiness but is there to help assuage our suffering. Everything that we do, we do it not for the sake of happiness but for the sake of assuaging our suffering. Therefore, it can be said that suffering is experienced by people the world over and the entire world is more like a gigantic hospital. And for as long as we still possess defilements, we must continue to experience the suffering of the round of rebirth. The Lord Buddha's Saying cited in 3.2.1 attests to the fact that suffering is part of life.

The kinds of suffering that people face in the Human Realm are nothing compared to those experienced in the State of Loss and Woe.

On one occasion, the Lord Buddha said to the venerable monks, "A fool that commits unwholesomeness in the body, in the word, and in the mind will be reborn in the State of Loss and Woe, in the States of Unhappiness, in the Place of Suffering, and in the Hell Realm. Suffering in the Human Realm can never be compared to that in the Hell Realm."

⁵⁷ Sang Jun-ngam. **Prateptum** [The Light of Dhamma]. B.E. 2544

One of the venerable monks asked the Lord Buddha, “Can an analogy of the comparison be given, Most Exalted One?”

The Lord Buddha answered, “Yes, it is like this. Suppose a court officer shows a thief to the king and says to him, “This is the thief. May it now please your majesty to exact punishment on him.”

The king says, “Pierce this man with 100 spears in the morning.” The court officer carries out the punishment as told. At noon, the king asks, “How is the thief?” The court officer answered, “He is still alive, sire.”

The king tells the officer to pierce the man with 100 additional spears at noon. In the evening, the king asks, “How is the thief?” The officer answers, “He is still alive, sire.” The king tells the officer to pierce the man with yet 100 more spears in the evening.”

The Lord Buddha said, “Now that the man has been pierced with 300 spears, do you think he suffers at all?” The venerable monks answered, “The thief would have suffered terribly already with just one spear left alone 300 spears, Most Exalted One.”

Next, the Lord Buddha picked up a stone the size of His palm and asked, “Monks, between this stone and the Himavanta Mountain, which is greater?”

The venerable monks answered, “Most Exalted One, this stone is but a tiny fraction of the Himavanta Mountain.”

The Lord Buddha said, “Likewise, the suffering experienced by the thief pierced by 300 spears is but a tiny fraction of the suffering in the Hell Realm.

The Hell Realm of Mahanarok has four corners and four entrances. It is divided into different areas. Each area is surrounded by an iron wall and covered with an iron lid. Its iron floor is fiery hot with flames that spread over a distance of 1,600 kilometers all around. Monks, the comparison of the suffering in the Human Realm and that in the Hell Realm cannot be adequately described in words.”⁵⁸

In the midst of suffering in the round of rebirth, only the Triple Gem can be our true refuge. The Lord Buddha says, “So many human beings, having met with harm, take as their refuge a mountain, a forest, an ashram, or a tree. None of these things can be taken as a refuge because they cannot lead one out of suffering. However, a person who takes the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha as his refuge will see the Four Noble Truths. The Four Noble Truths include Suffering, the Cause of Suffering, the Cessation of Suffering and the Noble Eightfold Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering. Such enlightened knowledge allows living beings to end suffering through righteous insight. Such refuge is blissful and fertile because it can lead the believer out of suffering.”⁵⁹

⁵⁸ *Suttantapiṭaka Majjhimanikāya Uparipannāsa. Bālapaṇḍit Sutta*. Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Press, vol. 14, no. 248-250, p. 293

⁵⁹ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Gāthā-Dhammapada*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 42, no. 24, p. 276-277



Assignments:

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

Chapter 4

The Triple Gem

The Core of Buddhism

Chapter 4

The Triple Gem: The Core of Buddhism

The Triple Gem - The Core of Buddhism

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4.10.5 What Is Worship?

4.10.6 How to Worship the Triple Gem

4.10.7 The Fruits of Worshipping the Triple Gem

Concepts

1. The Triple Gem or Phraratanattaya means the three precious gems and includes Buddharatana, Dhammaratana, and Sangharatana.
2. There are two types of Triple Gem: external and internal. The External Triple Gem includes the Lord Buddha who founded Buddhism, the Dhamma or the Lord Buddha's Teachings, and the Sangha or the Lord Buddha's disciples.

The Internal Triple Gem includes Buddharatana, Dhammaratana, and Sangharatana. Buddharatana is the Dhammakaya that dwells at the center of the Lord Buddha's body. The center of the body is also called the seventh base. Dhammakaya also dwells at the seventh base of every human being's body. Dhammaratana is the Dhamma Sphere which gives rise to Dhammakaya. This Dhamma Sphere is located at the center of Dhammakaya. Sangharatana is the refined Dhammakaya Bodies that dwell inside Dhammaratana.

3. The Internal Triple Gem is important because it can lead human beings to escape from suffering whereas the External Triple Gem is the means to help us attain the Internal Triple Gem.
4. The word "Dhammakaya" can be found in different Buddhist texts such as the Tripitaka, the Commentary, the Sub-commentary, the Visuddhimagga, the Milindapanha, the book "Patamasamabodhigatha", etc.
5. Dhammakaya or Phra Dhammakaya possesses great supernormal powers. Dhammakaya can, for example, enable one to recall one's previous lives, to know what other people are thinking, to visit the Celestial Realm, to visit Nibbana, etc.
6. The different levels of the Internal Triple Gem include Gotrabhu Dhammakaya Bodies, Sotapanna Dhammakaya Bodies, Sakadagami Dhammakaya Bodies, Anagami Dhammakaya Bodies, and Arahant Dhammakaya Bodies. Phra Dhammakaya looks just like the Lord Buddha sitting in a half lotus position. However, Phra Dhammakaya possesses one additional feature in that he has a lotus bud at the top of His crown. Phra Dhammakaya is as clear as a mirror and possesses all the thirty-two physical attributes of the Perfect Man.
7. Gotrabhu Dhammakaya is Buddharatana. His lap measures somewhat less than 10 meters and his height (from His lap to the lotus bud on top of His crown) is somewhat less than 10 meters. Sangharatana is five times the size of Buddharatana. Phra Dhammakaya at other levels assumes larger sizes.
8. The Internal Triple Gem can be attained through meditation practice when we can keep our mind still in a relaxed, comfortable, and continuous manner at the seventh base, which is the center of our body.

9. We worship the Triple Gem because we realize its incomparable virtues. There are two ways to worship the Triple Gem. These include Amisapuja or worshipping with objects such as flowers, etc., and Patipattipuja or worshipping through meditation practice so that the Internal Triple Gem can be attained.

Objectives

1. To enable the student to gain a deeper understanding about the Triple Gem.
2. To enable the student to apply what he has learnt to his daily life especially in terms of meditation practice and the attainment of the Internal Triple Gem.

Chapter 4

The Triple Gem: The Core of Buddhism

4.1 What Is the Triple Gem?

The term “Phraratanattaya” comes from three different words namely, Phra, Ratana, and Taya.

The word “Phra” means “sublime” and is used as a prefix to show admiration.

The word “Ratana” means “gem”.

The word “Taya” means “three”.

Therefore, the term Phraratanattaya means the three sublime gems. These include Buddharatana: The sublime gem representing the Lord Buddha; Dhammaratana: The sublime gem representing the Dhamma; and Sangharatana: The sublime gem representing the Sangha.

The Triple Gem is exquisite and sublime. It is more sublime than all the other gems and all the material wealth. No gems or material wealth can ever be compared to the Triple Gem. This fact is stated in the Ratana Sutta as follows:

...Treasures in this and other worlds, precious gems in the Celestial Realm, none can be compared to the Tathagata, for Buddharatana is exquisite...

...The venerable monk Phra Sakya has a stout heart. He has attained the Dhamma which causes all defilements to be removed, and makes it impossible for them to remain. The Dhamma is everlasting and exquisite. Nothing in existence can ever be compared to the Dhamma. Dhammaratana is exquisite...

...The eight or four pairs of individuals are admired by righteous men. They are worthy of alms-offering. They are the Tathagata’s disciples. Alms offered to such individuals bear great fruits. Sangharatana is exquisite...¹

The Tathagata or Phra Sakya refers to the Lord Buddha. The eight or four pairs of individuals are the Ariyasangha or the holy individuals who have attained the Fruit of Sotapanna all the way to the Fruit of Arahatsip. There are four pairs of Ariyasangha. The first pair consists of the Path of Sotapanna and the Fruit of Sotapanna. The second pair consists of the Path of Sakadagami and the Fruit of Sakadagami. The third pair consists of the Path of Anagami and the Fruit of Anagami. The fourth pair consists of the Path of Arahatsip and the Fruit of Arahatsip. Therefore, Sangharatana means Ariyasangha.

¹ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Khuddakapāṭha Dhammapada*. Siamrath Pali Language, vol. 25, no. 7, p. 3-6

Sangharatana does not mean ordinary monks, for ordinary monks are called Sammatisangha. Some of the Ariyasangha during our Lord Buddha's time included Phra Sariputra Thera, Phra Mahamoggallana Thera, Phra Ananda Thera, Phra Anuruddha Thera, etc.

4.2 The Types of Triple Gem

There are two types of Triple Gem: the External Triple Gem and the Internal Triple Gem. Most people have the understanding that the Triple Gem means the Lord Buddha (the personage who founded Buddhism), the Dhamma (the Lord Buddha's Teachings), and the Sangha (Ariya monks and ordinary monks). In other words, the Triple Gem, which most people know about, is the External Triple Gem. Most people do not know about the Internal Triple Gem which exists within the body of every human being regardless of his race or creed.

In this chapter, details about the Internal Triple Gem will be presented but the External Triple Gem will be described in detail in chapters 5, 6, and 7.

The Internal Triple Gem consists of Buddharatana, Dhammaratana, and Sangharatana. Luang Pu Wat Paknam gave us a clear explanation of the Internal Triple Gem as follows:

Buddharatana is Phra Dhammakaya. Phra Dhammakaya is the entity that exists inside the body of every human being and it is Dhammakaya who leads us to attain Enlightenment. Phra Dhammakaya leads us to penetrate the Four Noble Truths which include Suffering, the Cause of Suffering, the Cessation of Suffering, and the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering. The Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering is also called the Noble Eightfold Path.²

Phra Dhammakaya looks like the Lord Buddha sitting in a half-lotus position but with a small lotus bud on the top of His crown. He is as clear as a mirror and possesses all the thirty-two physical attributes of the Perfect Man. He is flawlessly and gloriously beautiful.

Dhammaratana is the Dhamma Sphere, which gives rise to Phra Dhammakaya. It is located at the center of Phra Dhammakaya's body.³ Dhammaratana's duty is to preserve Buddharatana. Dhammaratana looks like a clear sphere.

Sangharatana is the refined Dhammakaya Bodies that dwell in the middle of Dhammaratana. And their duty is to preserve Dhammaratana.

Phra Dhammakaya that is Buddharatana as mentioned above is called "The Coarse Dhammakaya Body".

² Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro). **The 69th Dhamma Lecture**, Part 31 on the *Ratana Sutta*, and Part 14 on *Khemakhemasaranagipigatha*, B.E. 2538, p. 381, 173-174

³ Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro). **The 69th Dhamma Lecture**, Part 29 on *Bhatt anumodanagatha*, B.E. 2538, p. 343

The Coarse Dhammakaya Body is the source of all Ratana. It means that once we attain the Coarse Dhammakaya Body or Buddharatana, we will be able to attain Dhammaratana and Sangharatana respectively. The reason is these three kinds of Ratana are one and the same. They depend on each other and they cannot be separated from each other.

Buddharatana, Dhammaratana, and Sangharatana are the true Triple Gem. They give rise to the External Triple Gem, which can be said to be merely “Nemitakanama”. Nemitakanama means a name that reflects its origin.⁴ Examples of Nemitakanama include: Buddhho, Dhammo, Sangho, etc.

Buddhho is the Lord Buddha. Buddha is the Nemitakanama that arises from Buddharatana.

Dhammo is the Dhamma. Dhamma is the Nemitakanama that arises from Dhammaratana.

Sangho is the Sangha. Sangha is the Nemitakanama that arises from Sangharatana.

There are numerous examples of Nemitakanama. For example, it is because the Lord Buddha possesses a pure, clear, and bright mind, which is completely devoid of defilements that He is given the Nemitakanama, “Araham”.

The Lord Buddha’s Teachings are true and logical and He deserves the Nemitakanama, “Sammāsambuddho”. The Lord Buddha also deserves this name because He has attained Self-Enlightenment and has also taught others to do it.

In the secular world, Nemitakanama is also used. For example, Queen Mallika was given this name by her parents and relatives because Mallika means jasmine. The reason is there was a rain of jasmines at the time of her birth. Therefore, “Mallika” is a Nemitakanama.

Regarding the Internal Triple Gem, this is what Luang Pu Wat Paknam had to say, “It has the appearance of a clear gem. That is why it is called “Ratana”.”⁵ In the book “Tippayaamnāt” compiled by Phraariyagunadhara of Wat Kao Suan Kuang in Konkaen Province, there was a description about the Indriya or sense-faculties of an Arahāt who has attained the Internal Triple Gem, “The Indriya of an Arahāt is called crystal Indriya because an Arahāt’s eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind are as crystal clear as a crystal sphere. An individual who has attained the crystal realm attains the crystal Buddha. Such is the case with the Arahāt who has attained Nibbana.”⁶

The External Triple Gem includes the Lord Buddha, the Lord Buddha’s Teachings, and the Lord Buddha’s disciples or the Sangha. The External Triple Gem is also called the Triple Gem because The Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha are as valuable as precious gems.

⁴ **The Royal Institute Dictionary Online**, B.E. 2525

⁵ Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro). **The 69th Dhamma Lecture**, Part 3 on *Ratanattayagamanapanamagatha*, B.E. 2538, p. 65

⁶ Phraariyagunadhara. **Tippayaamnāt**, B.E. 2527, p. 507-512

Why must the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha be compared to precious gems? The reason is precious gems are objects that delight their owner. Whoever possesses a lot of precious gems feels satisfied and happy that he is not poor. Moreover, whoever sees these objects cannot help but take great delight in them.

Luang Pu Wat Paknam had this to say about the Internal Triple Gem, “Phra Buddharatana, Phra Dhammaratana, and Phra Sangharatana are the real Buddhism. They are the core of Buddhism. As Buddhists, whether we are householders or monks, we must get to know the Internal Triple Gem. Without the knowledge of the Internal Triple Gem, we cannot keep ourselves safe.”⁷

Buddharatana, Dhammaratana, and Sangharatana are the real Triple Gem and they dwell inside the body of every human being in the same way that they dwell inside the body of our Lord Buddha. The Internal Triple Gem can be attained by every human being regardless of his gender, age, language, religion, and race. If Prince Siddhattha did not attain Self-Enlightenment through the attainment of the Internal Triple Gem, He could never be called the Lord Buddha. When ordinary monks become Ariyasangha, it is because they have attained the Internal Triple Gem. Therefore, the attainment of Enlightenment by these personages attests to the existence of the Internal Triple Gem.

⁷ Phramonkoltheppmuni (Sodh Candasaro). **The 69th Dhamma Lecture**, Part 30 on *Bhattachanumodanagāthā*, B.E. 2538, p. 359

4.3 The Triple Gem and Its Importance

Both the External Triple Gem and the Internal Triple Gem are very important, for they are the core of Buddhism. They are our refuge. They can lead us to the end of suffering. The External Triple Gem helps us to attain the Internal Triple Gem. In other words, when we listen to the Dhamma lectures from the Lord Buddha or from the Sangha and practice according to the teachings, we will be able to attain the Internal Triple Gem and it is the Internal Triple Gem that can lead us to the end of suffering.

There were a large number of Buddhists in the past that willingly gave up their material wealth in order to ordain as Buddhist monks and attain the Internal Triple Gem. Such important monks as Phra Sariputra Thera, Phra Mahamoggallana, Phra Mahakassapa, Phra Anuruddha, etc., had all been from a very wealthy family. Phra Anuruddha, who used to be the prince who never knew the term “There’s none” in all his life, still gave up his great material wealth and position in order to search for a superior treasure in the form of the Internal Triple Gem.

Some of these individuals in the past possessed replenishable wealth which is desirable to all and yet they knew to value the Triple Gem above and beyond their material wealth. Therefore, they abandoned their material wealth in order to ordain as monks. Such individuals include Jatila, Jotika, etc. Jatila was the owner of a gold mountain which could replenish itself. Jotika was the owner of a seven-story castle which was made of precious gems. He also had four replenishable treasure troves, etc. Kings and queens had been known to abdicate their thrones in order to ordain as monks. Examples include King Mahakappina and Queen Anojadevi.

King Mahakappina and Queen Anojadevi ruled the city of Kukakutavadi and possessed a vast amount of material wealth. One day the king heard from some merchants that the Triple Gem had happened. He was so overjoyed by the news that he gave the merchants the sum of 300,000. Afterward, the king along with his ministers decided to ordain as monks.

The king said to the merchant, “Queen Anojadevi will also give you the sum of 300,000 if you will go and tell her that “The king has abdicated the throne and now the throne is rightfully yours.” Should the queen ask you, “Where is the king going?” tell her that the king has decided to ordain as a monk under the Lord Buddha. The ministers followed the king’s example so that their wives could be informed of their decision to undertake ordination. Soon after their ordination, the king and his ministers attained Arahatsip.

When Queen Anojadevi knew of the king's and the ministers' decision to undertake ordination, she called a meeting of all the ministers' wives and said to them, "The king heard about the happening of the Triple Gem and worshipped the valuable news with a sum of 300,000. The king left the throne as if it were spit and went to ordain as a monk. I have worshipped the news about the Triple Gem with the sum of 900,000. This throne not only brings suffering to the king but to me as well. Why then should I kneel down to receive the spit from the king's mouth? I desire not the throne and I too will undertake ordination."⁸ As it turned out, Queen Anojadevi and the ministers' wives also undertook ordination and all of them had attained Ariyahood.

⁸ *Dhammapadaṭṭhakāthā Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Gāthā-Dhammapada*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 41, p. 312-313

4.4 Mentions of Dhammakaya in the Tripitaka

Mentions of Dhammakaya can be found in different Buddhist texts. These include the Tripitaka, the Commentary, the Sub-Commentary, the Visudhimagga, the Milindapanha, the book “Patamasamabhodigatha”, Scriptures written down on gold tablets, Scriptures written down on stone tablets as well as other books on Buddhism. Moreover, there are many mentions of Dhammakaya in the Mahayana Buddhism texts. But here we will present only the mentions found in Theravada Buddhism.

4.4.1 Mentions of Dhammakaya in the Tripitaka

There are altogether five mentions of Dhammakaya in the Tripitaka.

1. In the Agganna Sutta: The Lord Buddha said, “The word ‘**Dhammakaya**’, ‘Brahmakaya’, ‘Dhammabhuti’, or ‘Brahmabhuti’, these are all the names of the Tathagatha.”⁹
2. In the Sarabhamgathagatha, Phra Sarabhangha Thera said, “Whichever path the Lord Buddhas Vipassi, Sikhi, Vessabhu, Kakusandha, Konagamana, and Kassapa had taken, so had the Lord Gautama Buddha. These seven Lord Buddhas are devoid of craving and have arrived at extinguishment. **They are reborn of Dhammakaya** who is unchangeable and they have taught living beings about the Four Noble Truths: Suffering, the Cause of Suffering, the Cessation of Suffering, and the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering.”¹⁰
3. In the Paccekabuddhapadana, it was written that all the Paccekabuddhas possess great virtues in that they possess **a large number of Dhammakaya**. Their minds have been liberated and they have gone beyond all suffering.¹¹
4. In the Mahapajapatigotamitheriyapadana, Queen Mahapajapatigotami Theri said, “Most Exalted One, I had in the past been like your mother. But now, you are my father. Most Exalted One, you have given me the happiness which is born of the Dhamma. You have given birth to me. This body of yours, I had helped to nurture and grow. However, my delightful **Dhammakaya**, you have helped to nurture and grow.”¹²

⁹ *Suttantapiṭaka Dīgha-nikāya Pāṭikavagga. Aggañña Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Press, vol. 11, no. 118, p. 88

¹⁰ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Theraggāthā Sattakanipāta Sarabhaṇagāthā.* Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Press, vol. 26, no. 490-492, p. 422

¹¹ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Apadāna Paccekabuddhapadāna Buddhavagga.* Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Press, vol. 32, no. 134, p. 24

¹² *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Apadāna Ekūposathikavagga.* Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Press, vol. 33, no. 130-131, p. 404

5. In the Atthasandassakatherapadana, Phra Atthasandassaka Thera said, “The Lord Buddha has manifested **Phra Dhammakaya** who is the source of all Ratana and whom no one can ever sully. Whoever sees Him cannot help but believe in Him.”¹³

From these writings, there are three points which correspond with Luang Pu Wat Paknam’s teachings on this subject.

- 1) Buddhahood or the state of being the Tathagatha happens with the attainment of Phra Dhammakaya. It does not mean the human body as stated by Phrasarabhamga Thera, “The seven Lord Buddhas happen because they have attained Phra Dhammakaya.” Or as stated by the Lord Buddha, “Dhammakaya is the name of the Tathagatha.”
- 2) In the Sarabhangatheragatha, it was written that all seven Lord Buddhas have attained Phra Dhammakaya and given the Dhamma lecture on the Four Noble Truths. This corresponds with Luang Pu Wat Paknam’s teachings when he said, “It is Phra Dhammakaya who knows the Four Noble Truths: the knowledge of Suffering, the knowledge of the Cause of Suffering, the knowledge of the Cessation of Suffering, and the knowledge of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering or the Eightfold Noble Path.”¹⁴
- 3) Dhammakaya exists inside every human being’s body. He dwells inside the body of every Lord Buddha, every Paccekabuddha, every disciple, and every human being as in the following statements, “All the Paccekabuddhas possess great virtues and a large number of Dhammakaya.” And “My delightful Dhammakaya, you (the Lord Buddha) have helped to nurture and grow”.

It is for these reasons that the Lord Buddha’s disciples, who have attained Enlightenment, are called Anubuddha, Sutabuddha, or Bahusuttabuddha. All three names have the same meaning. They mean an individual who has attained the Lord Buddha or Phra Dhammakaya within him.

- 4) Dhammakaya is the source of all Ratana as stated by Phra Atthasandassaka Thera, “The Lord Buddha has manifested Dhammakaya who is the source of all Rattana. According to Luang Pu Wat Paknam, “Ratana” means the Triple Gem. Whoever attains Phra Dhammakaya or “Buddharatana” will also attain “Dhammaratana” and “Sangharatana” because all three kinds of Rattana depend on each other and cannot be separated from one another.

¹³ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Apadāna Sobhittavagga*. Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Press, vol. 32, no. 50, p. 301

¹⁴ Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro). **The 69th Dhamma Lecture**, Part 31 on the *Ratana Sutta* and Part 14 on *Khemākhemasaraṇagīpīgāthā*, B.E. 2538, p. 381, 173-174

4.4.2 The Lord Buddha Is Dhammakaya

Wherever it is said that the Lord Buddha is Dhammakaya, it does not mean the physical body of Prince Siddhattha. On one occasion, our Lord Buddha said to Phra Vakkali who greatly admired the Lord Buddha's Perfect Man form, "Vakkali, this body that you so admire undergoes deterioration and decay. What use has it? Behold, Vakkali, whoever sees the Dhamma is said to have seen me. Likewise, whoever sees me is said to have seen the Dhamma."¹⁵ In the Commentary's Vakkali Sutta, it was written, "**Dhammakaya is the Tathagatha.**"¹⁶ These two statements mean that once Phra Vakkali could attain the Dhamma or Dhammakaya within him, he would be able to see the Tathagatha. However, the physical body of the Lord Buddha is not the Tathagatha because it undergoes deterioration and decay.

In the Sanghati Sutta, the Lord Buddha had the same thing to say.

Behold, monks, a monk can hold on to my outer robe and follow my footsteps but if he is dominated by covetousness, all kinds of sense-desire, and thoughts of revenge, such a monk can be said to be very far away from me and I from him. Why? Because he cannot see the Dhamma and since he cannot see the Dhamma, it means that he cannot see me.

Behold, monks, a monk can be as far as 1,600 kilometers away from me but if he is not dominated by covetousness or all kinds of sense-desire or thoughts of revenge, his mind is steadfast and still, his sense-faculties are restrained, such a monk can be said to be very close to me and I to him. Why? Because he can see the Dhamma and since he can see the Dhamma, it means that he can see me."¹⁷

It was written in the Commentary's Sanghati Sutta, "The nine super-mundane states or Lokuttaradhamma-9 are called the Dhamma. You cannot see these states because your mind is dominated by covetousness, etc. Since you cannot see the Dhamma, you cannot see Dhammakaya."¹⁸ It was also written in the Commentary's Vakkali Sutta, "Dhammakaya is the Tathagatha. And the nine super-mundane states are called the body of the Tathagatha."¹⁹

Covetousness (Abhijja) belongs to the greed (Lobha) family of defilements.

¹⁵ *Suttantapiṭaka Samyuttanikāya Khandhavalavagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 27, no. 216, p. 276

¹⁶ *Sārathapakathāsini Aṭṭhakathā-samyuttanikāya Khandhavalavagga. Aṭṭhakathā-vakkali Sutta*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 27, p. 283

¹⁷ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Itivuttaka. Saṅghāṇi Sutta*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 45, no. 272, p. 581

¹⁸ *Paramatthadīpanī Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Itivuttaka. Aṭṭhakathā-saṅghāṇi Sutta*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 45, p. 583

¹⁹ *Sārathapakathāsini Aṭṭhakathā-samyuttanikāya Khandhavalavagga. Aṭṭhakathā-vakkali Sutta*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 27, p. 283

4.4.3 Dhammakaya Is Lokuttaradhamma-9

Lokuttaradhamma-9 means the Dhamma which exists beyond the worlds. It is contrary to Lokiyadhamma which means the Dhamma that belongs to the worlds. Lokuttaradhamma-9 or the nine super-mundane states include Magga-4 or the Four Paths, Phala-4 or the Four Fruits, and Nibbana.²⁰

“Magga-4 or the Four Paths include Sotapattimagga, Sakadagamimagga, Anagamimagga, and Arahattamagga. Phala-4 or the Four Fruits include Sotapattiphala, Sakadagamiphala, Anagamiphala, and Arahattaphala.”²¹

According to the Commentary’s Sanghati Sutta and the Commentary’s Vakkali Sutta mentioned earlier, it can be summarized that “Not seeing the Dhamma means not seeing Lokuttaradhamma-9. Not seeing Lokuttaradhamma-9 means not seeing Dhammakaya. Dhammakaya is the Tathagatha and Lokuttaradhamma-9 is the body of the Tathagatha.”

Therefore, the Four Paths and the Four Fruits correspond to Dhammakaya at each level. The Four Paths are Sotapattimagga Dhammakaya, Sakadagamimagga Dhammakaya, Anagamimagga Dhammakaya, and Arahattamagga Dhammakaya. The Four Fruits are Sotapattiphala Dhammakaya, Sakadagamiphala Dhammakaya, Anagamiphala Dhammakaya, and Arahattaphala Dhammakaya.

In the Commentary’s Sona Sutta, it was written, “After Phra Sona became a monk, he studied subjects of meditation under the teaching monk. Having endeavored in meditation practice, he became a Sotapanna. Afterward, he continued to practice Vipassana meditation in order to achieve elevated meditative attainments. He attained Abbinna-6 or because he sees the Four Noble Truths that he is said to have seen the Six Kinds of Higher Knowledge within that same Rains-Retreat... It is the Lord Buddha’s Dhammakaya.”²² In the Commentary’s Dhaniya Sutta, it was written, “The four people namely Mr. Dhaniya, his wife, and his two daughters listened to the scriptural verses concerning the Four Noble Truths...and attained the Fruit of Sotapanna. At the time, Mr. Dhaniya saw the Lord Buddha’s Dhammakaya with the eye of his insight...”²³

These writings indicate that being a Sotapanna means seeing the Dhammakaya of the Lord Buddha and the Lord Buddha’s Dhammakaya is called Buddharatana. And Buddharatana resides within the body of every human being. In order to see Dhammakaya, one must practice meditation until one’s mind becomes so still that one can see the different levels of Dhammakaya starting from Gotrabhu Dhammakaya all the way

²⁰ *Paramatthadīpanī Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Itivuttaka. Aṭṭhakathā-brāhmaṇa Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 45, p. 641

²¹ *Abidhammapiṭaka Vibhaṅg.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 78, no. 837, p. 600

²² *Paramatthadīpanī Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Udāna.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 44, p. 558

²³ *Paramatthajotika Aṭṭhakathā-urakhavagga Suttanipāta. Aṭṭhakathā-dhniya Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 46, p. 84

to Arahāt Dhammakaya. These writings correspond with Luang Pu Wat Paknam's teachings on the refined bodies as presented in 3.1.6.

In regards to Nibbana, Luang Pu Wat Paknam said that the Dhamma, which gives rise to the different Dhammakaya Bodies, resides at the center of each Dhammakaya. The Dhamma which gives rise to Arahāt Dhammakaya is called Viragadhatuviragadham. Since Nibbana is also Viragadhatuviragadham; therefore, Arahāt Dhammakaya and Nibbana attract each other such that when one attains Arahātship one also attains Nibbana. This means that one cannot attain Nibbana without the attainment of Arahātship.²⁴

The word "Viraga" in the term "Viragadhatuviragadham" means the Dhamma which puts an end to Raga. It is the same as the absence of lust. Such is the nature of Nibbana.

Mentions of Dhammakaya as presented here will not enable the student to penetrate the subject of Dhammakaya. To understand this subject thoroughly, the student must practice meditation earnestly until he can attain Phra Dhammakaya. During the time of Luang Pu Wat Paknam, a large number of people had attained Phra Dhammakaya. Presently, there are also many individuals who have witnessed Phra Dhammakaya for themselves. This subject will be discussed as follows:

Phra Dhammakaya, who resides within each and every one of us, possesses great supernormal powers. The attainment of Phra Dhammakaya enables the individual to be capable of supernormal feats such as recalling one's previous lives, being able to read other people's mind, healing illnesses, visiting Nibbana, visiting the Celestial Realm, visiting the Hell Realm, helping people from the Hell Realm, etc.

Master Nun Chandra Khonnokyoong went at one point to help her father out of the Hell Realm. She said, "When I first attained Phra Dhammakaya and my Dhammakaya was very clear and very bright, I became one with my Dhammakaya and went to visit my father in the Hell Realm. Fire in the Hell Realm was extinguished temporarily and I asked Phra Dhammakaya to teach my father to pledge the Five Precepts. Once my father pledged the Five Precepts, the merit accumulated in his previous lives from having given alms, observed the Precepts, and practiced meditation came to his aid immediately. Once my father could recall his past merit along with the merit earned from pledging the Five Precepts in the presence of Phra Dhammakaya, he could be removed from the Hell Realm. His merit moved him to a small and shabby celestial abode in the Celestial Realm."

Such is one example of Phra Dhammakaya's supernormal powers. However, Phra Dhammakaya's ultimate supernormal power is in helping us completely remove our defilements.

²⁴ Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro). **The 69th Dhamma Lecture**, Part 4 on the *Ādittapariyaya Sutta*, B.E. 2538, p. 79

4.5 Different Levels of the Internal Triple Gem

Luang Pu Wat Paknam taught about the different levels of the Internal Triple Gem in his 31st, 33rd, 36th, and 66th Dhamma lectures as follows:

The 1st level:	Buddharatana	This is the coarse Gotrabhu Dhammakaya.
	Dhammaratana	This is the Dhamma Sphere which gives rise to the coarse Gotrabhu Dhammakaya. It resides at the center of the Gotrabhu Dhammakaya.
	Sangharatana	This is the refined Gotrabhu Dhammakaya who resides at the center of Dhammaratana.
The 2nd level:	Buddharatana	This is the coarse Sotapanna Dhammakaya.
	Dhammaratana	This is the Dhamma Sphere... which resides at the center of the coarse Sotapanna Dhammakaya.
	Sangharatana	This is the refined Sotapanna Dhammakaya who resides at the center of Dhammaratana.
The 3rd level:	Buddharatana	This is the coarse Sakadagami Dhammakaya
	Dhammaratana	This is the Dhamma Sphere... which resides at the center of the coarse Sakadagami Dhammakaya.
	Sangharatana	This is the refined Sakadagami Dhammakaya who resides at the center of Dhammaratana.
The 4th level:	Buddharatana	This is the coarse Anagami Dhammakaya.
	Dhammaratana	This is the Dhamma Sphere... which resides at the center of the coarse Anagami Dhammakaya.
	Sangharatana	This is the refined Anagami Dhammakaya who resides at the center of Dhammaratana.
The 5th level:	Buddharatana	This is the coarse Arahant Dhammakaya.
	Dhammaratana	This is the Dhamma Sphere... which resides at the center of the coarse Arahant Dhammakaya.
	Sangharatana	This is the refined Arahant Dhammakaya which resides at the center of Dhammaratana.

Luang Pu Wat Paknam also taught that within the Refined Arahāt Dhammakaya there are Asankheyya* levels of the Internal Triple Gem or Asankheyya levels of Buddharatana, Dhammaratana, and Sangharatana.²⁵

4.6 Characteristics and Size of the Internal Triple Gem

Luang Pu Wat Paknam taught about Samatha and Vipassana meditation as well as the characteristics and size of the Internal Triple Gem at the different levels in his first Dhamma lecture as follows:

Dhammakaya at each level looks like the Buddha Image with a small lotus bud on top of His crown. Phra Dhammakaya is clear like a mirror and possesses all the thirty-two physical attributes of the Perfect Man and He is perfectly beautiful.

The coarse Gotrabhu Dhammakaya is Buddharatana. Every Dhammakaya is seated in a half-lotus position. The lap of the coarse Gotrabhu Dhammakaya is somewhat less than ten meters wide and His height, which is measured from His lap to the top of the small lotus bud, is somewhat less than ten meters as well.

The coarse Gotrabhu Dhammakaya's Dhammaratana is a perfect sphere. It is pure and clear. And its diameter is the same as the width of the coarse Gotrabhu Dhammakaya's lap or somewhat less than ten meters. However, Sangharatana or the refined Gotrabhu Dhammakaya is five times the size of the coarse Gotrabhu Dhammakaya.

The coarse Sotapanna Dhammakaya is Buddharatana. His lap is ten meters wide and His height, which is measured from His lap to the top of the small lotus bud, is also ten meters. The coarse Sotapanna Dhammakaya's Dhammaratana has a diameter equal to ten meters. Sangharatana or the refined Sotapanna Dhammakaya is twenty meters wide and twenty meters high.

The coarse Sakadagami Dhammakaya is twenty meters wide and twenty meters high. The diameter of Dhammaratana is equal to twenty meters. Sangharatana or the refined Sakadagami Dhammakaya is thirty meters wide and thirty meters high.

The coarse Anagami Dhammakaya is thirty meters wide and thirty meters high. The diameter of Dhammaratana is equal to thirty meters and Sangharatana or the refined Anagami Dhammakaya is forty meters wide and forty meters high.

The coarse Arahāt Dhammakaya is forty meters wide and forty meters high. The diameter of Dhammaratana is equal to forty meters. However, Luang Pu Wat Paknam did not specify the dimension of Sangharatana or the refined Arahāt Dhammakaya. He mentioned only that the size increases respectively.

* Asankheyya is a number so large as to be uncountable by ordinary individuals.

²⁵ Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro). **The 69th Dhamma Lecture**, Part 36 on *Khandhaparitta*, B.E. 2538, p. 446

4.7 Location of the Internal Triple Gem

The Internal Triple Gem exists at the center of every human being's body. This position is called the seventh base. And it is two fingers' width above the navel.²⁶ The Internal Triple Gem is made up of refined elements and is therefore invisible to the physical eyes. It cannot be detected by even the most advanced and the most sensitive scientific instruments. Therefore, it is not surprising that the majority of people in this world know nothing about the Internal Triple Gem. Some may have heard about it but do not believe in its existence. But it is a fact that the Internal Triple Gem can be seen only through the successful practice of the Noble Eightfold Path.

The center of the body is called the seventh base. It is two fingers width above the navel. This position is also called "Majjhimapatipada".

The term "Majjhimapatipada" comes from the words "Majjhima" + "Patipada".

"Majjhima" means middle, "Patipada" means the way and conduct.²⁷

Therefore, "Majjhimapatipada" have two meanings: firstly, the middle way and neutral conduct; secondly, the practice of neutrality.

The middle way means the center of the body or the seventh base, and it is two fingers' width above the navel.

The practice of neutrality means the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path. The Noble Eightfold Path includes Right View, Right Thought, Right Word, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

Every human being has at the center of his body the Internal Triple Gem. This is true regardless of his race, language, religion, economic status, and whether he is a Buddha, a Paccekabuddha, an Ariya individual, a Buddhist, a beggar, an itinerant, a merchant, a man, a woman. The only difference between the Lord Buddha and the rest of humanity is the fact that the Lord Buddha attains the Internal Triple Gem through the process of Self-Enlightenment. Having thus been self-enlightened, the Lord Buddha has taught other beings to follow in His example and attain Enlightenment in the same way that He has. A Paccekabuddha attains Self-Enlightenment but does not teach it to anyone. Ariya individuals listen to the Lord Buddha's Teachings and practice them until they can attain Enlightenment in the same way that the Lord Buddha has. It is for this reason that the Lord Buddha's Ariya disciples are also called Anubuddha.

²⁶ Phramonkoltheppmuni (Sodh Candasaro). **The 69th Dhamma Lecture**, Part 29 on *Bhatt anumodanagāthā*, B.E. 2538, p. 338

²⁷ **The Royal Institute Dictionary Online**, B.E. 2525

Dhammakaya was mentioned in the book about “Samatha-Vipassana” called “Buddharangsritrisadeenana”, “Once the body and the mind are happy, the individual employs his mind to contemplate the corporeality of Dhammakaya by following Bojjhariga-7 or the Seven Factors of Enlightenment until the mind can penetrate all things tangible and intangible. It is then that the individual has himself and the Dhamma as his refuge...”²⁸

This particular book talks about the way of practicing “Samatha-Vipassana” in four different eras in the ancient past. These include Krungsrisattanaganahut (Vientiane), Krungsriayudhaya, Krungthonburi, and Krunggrattanakosintra. The book talks about a method called “Meditating on the Buddha-Virtues, the Dhamma-Virtues, and the Sangha-Virtues”. The origin of this practice came from Wat Pradurongdhamkrungsriayudhaya. The book says that the practice was written down by a group of fifty-six Disapamokkha teachers in B.E. 572. Therefore, this record, which provides evidence about Dhammakaya, is both ancient and highly important.

²⁸ **Buddharangsritrisadeenana: *Samatha-Vipassanā Kammaṭṭhāna***, B.E. 2479, p. 267-285, 369

4.8 How to Attain the Internal Triple Gem

The practice of the Noble Eightfold Path is the way to attain the Internal Triple Gem. The Noble Eightfold Path enables the practitioner to gradually remove defilements which include Lobha (greed), Dosa (anger), and Moha (ignorance) until eventually he can attain the Internal Triple Gem. And it is the Internal Triple Gem that does the work of removing the remaining subtle defilements.

One may ask what one must do in order to practice the Noble Eightfold Path. The quickest way to practice the Noble Eightfold Path is to practice meditation. The Lord Buddha says, “Behold, monks, when a monk practices meditation earnestly, even though he may not wish for his mind to be liberated from defilements but it will be anyway. Why? Because he has practiced Satipatthan-4, etc., and the Noble Eightfold Path.”²⁹

Satipatthan-4 is Right Mindfulness, and Right Mindfulness is part of the Noble Eightfold Path.

This saying of the Lord Buddha teaches us that meditation practice is synonymous with practicing the Noble Eightfold Path.

It was written in the Commentary, “What a Yogi practices is called “Bhavana”. Since “Bhavana” means meditation, the full name for meditation practice is “Samadhibhavana.”³⁰

“Samadhi” here means “Sammāsamadhi” or Right Concentration, and Right Concentration is part of the Noble Eightfold Path. It can be said that when one practices Right Concentration, one is essentially practicing the Noble Eightfold Path. Therefore, Right Concentration is the heart of the Noble Eightfold Path. The Lord Buddha says, “Behold monks, Right Concentration of the Ariya kind is made up of Right View, Right Thought, Right Word, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, and Right Mindfulness. Monks, when the mind comes to a standstill as a result of these seven components, the mind is said to possess Right Concentration.”³¹

This saying of the Lord Buddha can be further elaborated as follows. Right Concentration is derived from the first seven paths starting from Right View to Right Mindfulness. Therefore, practicing Right Concentration allows us to practice all the eight components of the Noble Eightfold Path. When the concentrating power of our mind increases with increasing meditation practice, the level of our Right View will also increase. Increasing Right View increases the level of Right Thought, Right Word, etc. When we practice more and more meditation, our mind will become increasingly pure, and eventually it can be completely liberated from defilements.

²⁹ *Suttantapiṭaka Aṅguttaranikāya Saṭṭakanipāta. Bhāvanā Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 37, no. 68, p. 252

³⁰ *Saddhammapakāsini Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Paṭisambhidāmagga.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 68, p. 46

³¹ *Suttantapiṭaka Majjhimanikāya Uparipaṇṇāsa. Mahacattārisaka Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 22, no. 253, p. 341

Luang Pu Wat Paknam taught that when we practice meditation, we are to rest our mind at the center of our body which is called the seventh base. When our mind can be kept still comfortably and continuously, at the right moment,³² it will fall into the center and comes to a standstill. This condition enables us to attain the “Pathamamagga Sphere”. This is the first Dhamma Sphere which can lead us to the Path and Fruit of Nibbana. Once the “Pathamamagga Sphere” is attained, the mind is kept still in the middle of the sphere comfortably and continuously until at the right moment five other Dhamma Spheres, which include the Sila Sphere, the Samadhi Sphere, the Panna Sphere, the Vimutti Sphere, and the Vimuttinanadassana Sphere, will be attained. There are altogether six spheres. Once the mind is kept still in the middle of the Vimuttinanadassana Sphere, at the right moment the refined human body or the astral body will be attained.

Next, the mind is kept still at the seventh base of the refined human body. At the right moment, the mind will attain another set of six spheres which include the Pathamamagga Sphere, the Sila Sphere, the Samadhi Sphere, the Panna Sphere, the Vimutti Sphere, and the Vimuttinanadassana Sphere. The mind is kept still in the middle of the Vimuttinanadassana Sphere and at the right moment the “Coarse Celestial Body” will be attained.

The next step is to keep the mind still at the seventh base of the Coarse Celestial Body. At the right moment another set of six spheres will be attained. This is followed by the Refined Celestial Body so on and so forth all the way to the Coarse Form Brahma Body, the Refined Form Brahma Body, the Coarse Non-Form Brahma Body, the Refined Non-Form Brahma Body, the Coarse Gotrabhu Dhammakaya, the Refined Gotrabhu Dhammakaya, the Coarse Sakadagami Dhammakaya, the Refined Sakadagami Dhammakaya, the Coarse Anagami Dhammakaya, the Refined Anagami Dhammakaya, the Coarse Arahata Dhammakaya, and the Refined Arahata Dhammakaya. Between each pair of inner bodies there are the six spheres of the Pathamamagga Sphere, the Sila Sphere, the Samadhi Sphere, the Panna Sphere, the Vimutti Sphere, and the Vimuttinanadassana Sphere.

Once we attain Phra Dhammakaya, we are said to have attained the Internal Triple Gem. The reason is Phra Dhammakaya is the source of all Ratana.

Buddharatana is the Coarse Dhammakaya.

Dhammaratana is the Dhamma Sphere, which gives rise to the Coarse Dhammakaya. Dhammaratana dwells at the center of Dhammakaya.

Sangharatana is the Refined Dhammakaya who dwells at the center of Dhammaratana.

There are different levels of the Internal Triple Gem. These start from Gotrabhu Dhammakaya to Arahata Dhammakaya.

³² At the right moment here implies the moment when the stillness of the mind is at the right condition.

In practicing Right Concentration for the purpose of attaining the Internal Triple Gem, there is only one thing that we must do. And that is to keep our mind still at the seventh base of our body comfortably and continuously. When our mind can be kept still in just the right way, it will continue to move inward until Phra Dhammakaya can be attained.

However, the attainment of the different levels of Ariyahood is a function of a person's accumulated merit and Perfections. If a person has cultivated enough Perfections, he can attain different levels of Ariyahood starting from the Path and Fruit of Sotapanna. If a person has not cultivated enough Perfections to attain Ariyahood, he can become a Gotrabhu individual by attaining and becoming as one with Gotrabhu Dhammakaya. Luang Pu affirmed that if we practice meditation earnestly, we can attain Gotrabhu Dhammakaya.

The Pathamamagga Sphere means the initial part of the Path and Fruit of Nibbana. This term "Pathamamagga" appears in an ancient Buddhist text called "Mulakaccaya". However, in the Tripitaka, the Pathamamagga Sphere is called "Dhammanupassanasatipatthan" or "Ekayanamagga" which means the main path. It is the only path which leads to the Path and Fruit of Nibbana. There are no other paths.

The Pathamamagga Sphere, which appears when all eight components of the Noble Eightfold Path come together, is also called "Maggasamamgi"³³ A person who can unite all eight components of the Noble Eightfold Path into one is said to be a person who is replete with Maggasamamgi.³⁴ A person who attains Maggasamamgi at the Lokuttara level is called an "Ariyamaggasamamgi" individual.³⁵

The size of the Pathamamagga Sphere differs according to each person's level of Perfections. A small Pathamamagga Sphere is the size of a star in the night sky. A medium Pathamamagga Sphere is the size of the full-moon as seen from the earth. And a large Pathamamagga Sphere is the size of the sun as seen from the earth. The Pathamamagga Sphere is pure and clear like a mirror. The Sila Sphere, the Samadhi Sphere, the Panna Sphere, the Vimutti Sphere, and the Vimuttinanadassana Sphere are of the same size as the Pathamamagga Sphere.

³³ Dattajeevo Bhikkhu. *The Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, B.E. 2537, p. 170

³⁴ *Aṭṭhasalini Aṭṭhakathā-dhammasaṅghī*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 76, p. 514

³⁵ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Paṭisambhidāmagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 68, no. 147, p. 754

4.9 The Satipatthan and the Samannaphala Suttas

The meditation method used in attaining the Internal Triple Gem as taught by Luang Pu Wat Paknam corresponds with the Satipatthan Sutta in which the Lord Buddha taught the monks to contemplate the body within the body, Vedana within Vedana, Citta within Citta, and Dhamma within Dhamma.³⁶ During meditation, once the mind can be kept still in a continuous and correct manner, one will see the unfolding of the Inner Bodies as described earlier.

As described in chapter 3, each inner body possesses Vedana (sensation) and Citta (mind) in the same way as the coarse human body. Besides Vedanakhanda, each inner body also possesses other Khanda or aggregates. Citta within Citta means the Namakhanda of the inner body which includes Sankharakhanda. Dhamma within Dhamma means the six Dhamma Spheres which include the Pathamamagga Sphere, the Sila Sphere, the Samadhi Sphere, the Panna Sphere, the Vimutti Sphere, and the Vimuttinanadassana Sphere.

In the Samannapha Sutta, the Lord Buddha said, “When a monk practices meditation until his mind is pure and bright... He causes his mind to produce forms which are born of the mind. That is, he can produce other bodies besides his own. These forms are complete with all the body parts and sense-faculties. It is like a man pulling a reed from the grass sheath. He can see that this part is the grass sheath, and this part is the reed. It is like a man pulling a sword out of its sheath. He knows that this part is the sword and this part is the sheath. It is like a man pulling a snake from the skin which it has just shed. He knows that this part is the snake and this part is the shed skin...”³⁷

Dr. James Santucci had analyzed the Samannaphala Sutta and expressed his opinion about the inner bodies, how they can be manifested, and how they are complete bodies. It is because one has attained these inner bodies that one comes to possess different psychic powers such as manifesting copies of his body, walking on water, and traveling in the air in a half-lotus position.

“With concentrated mind, he produces a mind-made or psychic body (mano-mayamkayam) and draws that body out of this body. Just as one were to remove a reed from the grass sheath, so too from the mind-made body is extracted a perfected mind-made body.”³⁸

“With concentrated mind (and perhaps due to the perfected mind-made or psychic body) comes the ability to demonstrate the various psychic powers (iddhi-) such as becoming many, walking on water and flying cross-legged.”³⁹

³⁶ *Suttantapiṭaka Majjhimanikāya Mūlapaṇṇāsa*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 17, no. 132, p. 606

³⁷ *Suttantapiṭaka Dīgha-nikāya Sīlakhandhavagga*. Siamrath Pali Language, vol. 9, no. 132, p. 73-74

³⁸ James Santucci (2003, Spring), Educational Concepts and Practices in Early Southern Buddhism, Hsi Lai Journal of Humanistic Buddhism, (4), pages 54-64 (Dr. James Santucci: Chair Department of Comparative Religion California State University.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 54-64

The subject of “forms that are born of the mind” or inner bodies are taught by the Lord Buddha in different texts such as the Amapattha Sutta, the Sonadanda Sutta, the Kudanta Sutta, the Mahali Sutta, the Jaliya Sutta, the Mahasihanada Sutta, the Subha Sutta, the Kevatta Sutta, the Lohicca Sutta. These teachings are the same as those appeared in the Samannaphala Sutta. These teachings affirm that inner bodies exist and they can be attained through the still mind during meditation practice.

This is just a brief presentation of how to attain the Internal Triple Gem. The student can gain more details about this subject by taking the courses under the grouping of meditation. There are eight courses altogether: from MD 101E: Basic knowledge about meditation to MD 408E: Vipassana meditation.

4.10 Respect and How to Worship the Triple Gem

4.10.1 What Is Respect?

Respect means a deep appreciation of someone else's goodness. We sincerely acknowledge his goodness. We regard him with respect. We treat him in a gentle and deferential manner. We show our respect for the person in his presence as well as behind his back.

Respect also includes an appreciation of animals and things which have been useful to us. The most concise meaning of respect is concentrating on the good points of people, animals, and things.

Before we can concentrate on the good points of people, animals and things, we must first take the time to carefully observe them over a prolonged period of time.

Another meaning of respect is realizing the importance of certain individuals, certain places, etc., after we have learnt about what makes them important.

When we show our respect, it means that we are showing our deep appreciation for someone's goodness through our action and our word. There are different ways to show respect. We can do it by giving way to the person, getting up to welcome him, providing him with a place to sit, holding our hands in a Namaste while talking to him, giving him a deep Namaste, asking for permission before doing something, standing at salute, presenting arms, lowering the flag, etc.

The proper way to show our respect is to express our appreciation for someone's goodness in a sincere manner. A student who pays respect to his teacher because he does not want to get a bad grade or a soldier who salutes his superior because he does not want to be punished is merely following certain etiquette. It is not a show of respect.

4.10.2 What in Buddhism Deserves Our Respect?

In the *Dasutadhara Sutta*, the Lord Buddha said, "A monk in this Dhamma-Discipline respects the Master, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. He respects education, heedfulness, and hospitality. These six virtues will cause him to meet with progression."⁴⁰

⁴⁰ *Suttantapiṭaka Dīgha-nikāya Pāṭikavagga. Dasutadhāra Sutta*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 16, no. 427, p. 421

Although there are so many people, places, and things that are relevant to us and yet the Lord Buddha teaches us to show our deep appreciation for merely six things.

- 1) The Lord Buddha
- 2) The Dhamma
- 3) The Sangha
- 4) Education: It means Sikkhattaya (the Threefold Training) which includes Sila (Precepts), Samadhi (concentration), Panna (insight), and other kinds of knowledge necessary for earning a living and pursuing Perfections.
- 5) Heedfulness: It means being heedful in regards to the pursuit of Perfections, and in living one's life.
- 6) Hospitality

This teaching does not mean that we should not respect our parents, our teachers, and other people or things that have been good or useful to us, for this is covered under the heading: Respect the Dhamma. The Lord Buddha teaches us about the important people in our life in the Singalaka Sutta under the topic of the Six Directions.

- 1) The front our parents
- 2) The back our spouse and children
- 3) The right our teachers
- 4) The left our friends
- 5) The above righteous monks
- 6) The below our subordinates

The Lord Buddha teaches us not only to respect the people in these Six Directions but also to be responsible for them.

Actually, we can group 4) education, 5) heedfulness, and 6) hospitality under 2) the Dhamma, since these three topics are relevant to the Dhamma. When arranged in this manner, we end up with the answer that the Triple Gem deserves our respect.

4.10.3 How to Pay Homage to the Triple Gem

1. Paying homage to the Lord Buddha: We pay homage to the Lord Buddha because we deeply appreciate the Buddha-Virtues. During the Lord Buddha's time, Buddhists paid homage to the Lord Buddha by doing the following:

1. They went to see the Lord Buddha three times a day: in the morning, during the day, and in the evening.
2. When the Lord Buddha was doing walking meditation bare-footed, so did they.
3. They never did walking meditation in an area above where the Lord Buddha was doing walking meditation.
4. They never sat in an area above where the Lord Buddha was sitting.
5. As a monk, he did not cover both of his shoulders in the Lord Buddha's presence.
6. They did not put on their shoes in the Lord Buddha's presence.
7. They did not open their umbrella in the Lord Buddha's presence.
8. They did not defecate or urinate in the Lord Buddha's presence.

After the Lord Buddha attained Complete Nibbana, Buddhists pay homage to the Lord Buddha by doing the following:

1. We go to pay homage at the Cetiya where the Holy Relics are housed whenever we can.
2. We go to pay homage at the Holy Places. These include the Lord Buddha's birthplace, the place of His Self-Enlightenment, the place where He gave the first Dhamma lecture, and the place where He attained Complete Nibbana.
3. We pay homage to the Buddha Image
4. We are respectful whenever we are inside the holy grounds.
5. We do not wear shoes on the ground surrounding a Cetiya.
6. We do not open our umbrella on the ground surrounding a Cetiya.
7. We do not talk while we are approaching a Cetiya.
8. When we approach the ground of the Upasatha Hall, we remove our shoes, close our umbrella, and we do not display any manner which is considered inappropriate.
9. We regularly practice according to the Lord Buddha's Teachings.

2. Paying homage to the Dhamma: We show our deep appreciation for the Dhamma-Virtues by doing the following:

1. When we know that a Dhamma lecture is being given, we make sure to attend it.
2. We listen to Dhamma lectures in a quiet, calm, and attentive manner.
3. During the Dhamma lecture, we do not fall asleep, talk, or let our mind wander.
4. We do not place Dhamma books on the floor.
5. We do not belittle the Dhamma in any way.
6. When we relay or teach the Dhamma, we must make sure that we do not make any mistake.

3. Paying homage to the Sangha: We show our deep appreciation for the Sangha-Virtues by doing the following:

1. We pay homage to them properly with a Namaste.
2. In their presence, we must assume an appropriate sitting posture.
3. We do not put our shoes on or open our umbrella in their presence.
4. We do not behave inappropriately in their presence.
5. We give a Dhamma lecture only when we are invited by a venerable monk.
6. We do not show off our Dhamma knowledge by solving a Dhamma problem unless we are invited by a venerable monk.
7. We do not walk, stand, or sit too close to a venerable monk.
8. We regard venerable monks with admiration.
9. We welcome them with requisites.

These are the ways to pay homage to the External Triple Gem. As for the way to pay homage to the Internal Triple Gem, Luang Pu Wat Paknam taught that we must practice meditation until we can attain the Internal Triple Gem. We must bring our mind to a standstill at the seventh base of our body. After we have attained the Internal Triple Gem, we must keep our mind on the Internal Triple Gem at all times. In other words, we pay homage to the Internal Triple Gem by paying constant attention to it, lest our attainment become just a very memorable memory.

4.10.4 The Fruits of Respectfulness

There is an old saying, “Whenever we want to make use of something, it is necessary that we first know its value. Likewise, before we can benefit from a person or thing, we must first have respect for the person or thing.” At the time when the physician Jivaka Komarabhacca (the Lord Buddha’s personal physician) went to study medicine in the city of Takkasila, after having spent seven years in school, he asked his teacher one day, “Have I completed the study yet?” His teacher answered, “Jivaka, you should carry a spade with you and walk around Takkasila for a distance of 16 kilometers. During your walk, check to see what plants have no medicinal value, when you find them I want you to dig them up.” Jivaka did as told and returned to report that he could not find any plant which has no medicinal value. At the report his teacher pronounced him a graduate of medicine.

This story teaches us how Jivaka was in indeed learnt in the art of medicine and medicinal herbs. On the contrary, if a person not learnt in the art were to do the same thing, he would have found a large number of plants which he thought to have no medicinal value.

Everything in this world has its own unique properties and if a person knows the unique properties of something, he will be able to make full use of it. For example, when scientists learn of the properties of a magnet, they can use it to produce electricity. Knowing the radioactive properties of the metal Radium, it can be used to treat diseases such as cancer.

However, it is extremely difficult to know the real properties of things. Only the wise and the sages can know them.

Each person in the world possesses his own unique brand of virtue; some are more virtuous than others. Whoever has the ability to know each person’s unique brand of virtue as it exists in reality will be able to do much in the way of good. For example, as a manager, he can assign work to his subordinates in accordance with each subordinate’s talents and abilities. In this way, they have the opportunity to contribute their best to the organization’s success.

A respectful person can be compared to a sea of goodness. He can see goodness all around him. He can imbibe such goodness in a way that it affects his thought, word, and action and this ability goes to improve his personality as well as giving him a clear and bright mind. He is in the position to turn every crisis into opportunity in the same way that a tree can turn feces and rotten leaves into fertilizer and uses it for its own growth. Most importantly, a person who possesses a clear and bright mind will attract good things and good people into his life. As the saying goes, “Birds of the feather flock together.”

A disrespectful person, who also has the habit of finding faults with others, has a mind which can be compared to a trash can filled with trash. Such a mind can be compared to a polluted river. Such a person can find reasons to feel aggravated all day long because he cannot see goodness in anything. During the Lord Buddha's time, there were some people who had the good fortune of meeting Him but could not see His virtues. Moreover, they had transgressed against Him and ended up being reborn in the hell realm of Mahanarok Aveci. One of these people was Phra Devadat.

A genuinely respectful and deferential person tends to be loved, admired, and supported in ways which help him to grow and prosper. A respectful person is like a live tree which can bend with the winds. A live tree is cared for, given fertilizer, watered, and pruned so that it can continue to grow, flower, and bear fruits. A disrespectful person is hard and inflexible just like a dead tree. No one nurtures a dead tree. It can no longer grow and it is only a matter of time before it is cut down.

When a person respects the Triple Gem the respect enables him to practice the Lord Buddha's Teachings so earnestly that he can eventually put an end to suffering. If he cannot completely remove all defilements just yet and has to continue undergoing the round of rebirth, at least he will be highborn and highly-respected in his future existences. These are the fruits of having respect for the Triple Gem. Respect for the Triple Gem enables a person to be reborn a Universal Monarch, a king, an aristocrat, etc.

4.10.5 What Is Worship?

Worship means the sincere expression of admiration. When we worship someone or something, we do so both publicly and privately. When we worship someone publicly, we are demonstrating to the person that we sincerely admire him for his virtue and goodness. When we worship a person privately, it means that we keep our mind on the person's virtues and we endeavor to follow in his footsteps. When we worship a virtuous person, it causes our mind to be noble and at the same time it prevents us from committing misdeeds.

Worship is one clever way to train our mind and rid it of arrogance because we are learning to appreciate someone else's virtue and goodness. It is for this reason that parents should teach their children to worship the Triple Gem. This way as the children grow up and learn more about the Triple Gem's virtues, they will be able to sincerely worship the Triple Gem because they have come to realize its true virtues.

4.10.6 How to Worship the Triple Gem

We can worship the Triple Gem in two ways.

1. **Amisapuja:** It means worshipping the Lord Buddha with objects such as fresh flowers, incense sticks, candles, and food at the family altar, in the temple, etc. Amisapuja includes the Food-Offering Ceremony held at Wat Phra Dhammakaya on the first Sunday of every month, worshipping the Cetiya with flowers, garlands, and gems. Amisapuja also includes the casting of Buddha Images, building a Pagoda in order to house the Holy Relics such as the Borobudur Pagoda, the Shwedagon Pagoda, etc.

Asoka the Great worshipped the Dhamma by having 84,000 stupas built in order to represent the 84,000 topics contained in the Dhamma. We can worship the Dhamma by worshipping the venerable monk who is a scholar of the Dhamma. On one occasion, the Lord Buddha said to a Brahmin, “Behold, Brahmin, if you wish to worship Dhammaratana, then worship any monk who is a scholar of the Dhamma.”⁴¹

We worship venerable monks by offering them requisites, garlands, building a stupa to house the relics of Arahats, building a memorial such as building the memorial of Luang Pu Wat Paknam in his birthplace, at Wat Phra Dhammakaya, and elsewhere in order to house his gold images.

One building, which was constructed for the purpose of worshipping the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, is called the Great Dhammakaya Cetiya. The top and the inner chamber of the Cetiya house altogether a total of one million Dhammakaya Images. This part represents Buddharatana. On the slope of the Cetiya is the part which represents Dhammaratana. The base of the Cetiya represents Sangharatana. It is the place where 10,000 monks can be seated during religious ceremonies.

2. **Patipattipuja:** It means practicing according to the Lord Buddha’s Teachings or the teachings of the Sangha especially when it comes to meditation practice. The Lord Buddha emphasizes the importance of Patipattipuja because Patipattipuja can help the practitioner to end suffering whereas Amisapuja cannot.

The Great Dhammakaya Cetiya was built as a place of worship and also as a place where one million people can come to practice meditation together. There is a large, open two story structure around the Cetiya which can accommodate a large number of Buddhists during important Buddhist ceremonies. It is a place where Buddhists all over the world can come together to practice meditation. The Great Dhammakaya Cetiya was built not only for Buddhism but also for humanity as a whole.

⁴¹ *SumamgalavilāsiniĀṭṭhakathā-dīgha-nikāya Pāṭikavagga. Aṭṭhakathā-pasadika Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 15, p. 295

4.10.7 The Fruits of Worshipping the Triple Gem

The ultimate fruit of Patipattipuja is the attainment of the Internal Triple Gem and the complete removal of defilements. The complete removal of defilements brings about the end of the round of rebirth and after one dies, one will go to live in Ayanatanibbana.

The fruit of Amisapuja is stupendous celestial wealth in the Celestial Realm. When reborn in the Human Realm, one will be high-born and highly-respected. One will be blessed with corporeality endowments, material wealth, and desirable attributes. These blessings will facilitate one's meditation practice. There are numerous examples of the fruits of Amisapuja in the Tripitaka but here only one example will be presented. It is the story of Phra Kassapa Thera.

In one previous lifetime, Phra Kassapa Thera was born during the time of the Lord Padumutara Buddha. After the Most Exalted One attained complete Nibbana, he held a meeting with his relatives and friends and said to them, "Since the Most Exalted One has attained Complete Nibbana, it is now time for us to worship Him." His relatives and friends agreed. Therefore, all of them worshipped the Lord Padumutara Buddha by building a Cetiya 50 meters high and used it to house the Holy Relics. In that existence, Phra Kassapa Thera also performed a large number of meritorious deeds. As a result, he was reborn in the Celestial Realm amidst stupendous celestial wealth. And as a human being he had been a Universal Monarch for a total of thirty-three times.

In his final existence, he was born in a wealthy Brahmin family with a net worth of 800 million. Later, he gave away all of his material wealth and ordained under our Lord Gautama Buddha. He had practiced meditation until he could achieve Patisambhida-4 (the Four Kinds of Analytical Knowledge), Vimokkha-8 (the Eight Stages of Release), and Abhinna-6 (the Six Kinds of Super-knowledge). He was an important monk⁴² who chaired the first Buddhist Council three months after the Lord Buddha's Complete Nibbana in order to settle questions about the Dhamma-Discipline. The Arahats at the first Council were responsible for grouping the Lord Buddha's Teachings into categories as they appear now in the Tripitaka.



Assignments:

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

⁴² *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Apadāna Part 1 Mahakassapatherāpadāna*. Siamrath Pali Language, vol. 32, no. 5, p. 30-31

Chapter 5

The Lord Buddha

Chapter 5

The Lord Buddha

The Lord Buddha

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Concepts

1. The Lord Buddha means, firstly, Phra Dhammakaya who dwells inside the body of the Lord Buddha, and secondly, the personage who attains Self-Enlightenment and teaches it to others.

The Lord Buddha is called “Phra Sammasambuddha” because He has attained Self-Enlightenment. He is called “The Defeater of Mara” because he was able to overcome the Mara force which tried to prevent Him from attaining Self-Enlightenment.

Every human being can aspire to Buddhahood. Once an individual resolves to become a Buddha, he must endeavor to pursue Perfections. And once Perfections have been pursued to the fullest extent, he will then be able to attain Self-Enlightenment. The name, which is used to call an individual who aspires to Buddhahood, is “Phra Bodhisatta”.

2. The Buddha-Virtues are incomparable and beyond description. However, the Buddha-Virtues can be expressed as purity, insight, and compassion.
3. Before His Self-Enlightenment, our Lord Buddha was a prince living in the city of Kapilavastu. His name was “Siddhattha”. He took up the religious life when he was 29 years old. It took him six years before he could attain Self-Enlightenment. He had spent 45 years establishing and propagating Buddhism and as a result, a whole host of beings were able to attain the different stages of Enlightenment. The Lord Buddha’s birth, Self-Enlightenment, and attainment of Complete Nibbana fall on the same day, which is the 15th day of the 6th waxing moon.
4. An individual aspiring to Buddhahood must pursue altogether ten Perfections. These include Generosity Perfection, Morality Perfection, Insight Perfection, Endeavor Perfection, Forbearance Perfection, Truthfulness Perfection, Resolution Perfection, Loving-Kindness Perfection, and Equanimity Perfection. There are three levels to each of these Perfections. These include Parami: Perfections at the basic level, Upaparami: Perfections at the level where one is willing to give up one’s flesh and blood, and Paramatthaparami: Perfections at the level where one is willing to give up one’s life.

Objectives

1. To enable the student to learn about the Lord Buddha.
2. To enable the student to use the Lord Buddha’s pursuit of Perfections as a role model for his own pursuit of Perfections.

Chapter 5

The Lord Buddha

5.1 Who Is the Lord Buddha?

On one occasion when our Lord Buddha was traveling between the town of Ukkattha and Setabaya, a Brahmin named “Dona” was also using the same road. The Brahmin had noticed the footprints left by the Lord Buddha. He saw in the footprint the image of a wheel complete with 1,000 spokes and a hub and thought that they could not be the footprints of a human being.

The Lord Buddha had gone to rest under a large tree. Dona followed the footprints until he reached the place where the Most Exalted One was sitting. He saw the Lord Buddha’s glorious form and went to have a closer look at Him.

Dona asked the Lord Buddha, “Are you a celestial being?”

The Lord Buddha answered, “I am not a celestial being.”

Dona asked, “Are you a Ghandabba?”

The Lord Buddha answered, “I am not a Ghandabba.”

Dona asked, “Are you a Yakkha?”

The Lord Buddha answered, “I am not a Yakkha.”

Dona asked, “Are you a human being?”

The Lord Buddha answered, “I am not a human being.”

Dona asked, “What are you then?”

The Lord Buddha answered, “Defilements, which I could not before remove, have now been removed. A lotus plant has its birth in the water; it grows in the water but its flowers rise above the water and are not wet by the water. Likewise, I was born into the world, grew up in the world but I am now above the world and cannot be tainted by the things of the world. Look here, Brahmin, remember me as the Buddha.

The defilements, which would cause me to be born a celestial being, a Ghandabba, a Yakkha, or a human being, have now been completely destroyed by me. Behold Brahmin, a lotus flower is above the water and it is not wet by the water; likewise, things of the world cannot taint my mind. It is for this reason that I am the Buddha.”¹

5.1.1 What Is the Meaning of “Buddha”?

In chapter 4 we learn that the real Lord Buddha is Phra Dhammakaya, the Internal Buddha who leads an individual to attain Enlightenment. Dhammakaya is Buddharatana and He dwells inside the body of the Lord Buddha. Here, the student will learn about the meaning of the word “Buddha” in other contexts as appeared in the Commentary.

The Commentary has provided us with several meanings of the word “Buddha”. Buddha means Enlightenment. Buddha causes living beings to wake up. Buddha is all-knowing. Buddha is all-seeing. Buddha attains Self-Enlightenment. Buddha has already bloomed. His defilements have been completely extinguished...”²

The word “Buddha” means a personage who has attained the Four Noble Truths through the process of Self-Enlightenment. Buddha means a personage whose defilements have been completely extinguished. He is all-seeing. He causes living beings to wake up by teaching them to attain Enlightenment. He has opened up like a lotus flower because He is replete with virtues.

However, to attain the Four Noble Truths, He must first attain Phra Dhammakaya. Therefore, it can be said that “Buddha” means the Lord Buddha, the personage in history who attained Phra Dhammakaya and subsequently the Four Noble Truths and taught them to others so that they could attain Enlightenment.

5.1.2 The Different Names Used to Refer to the Lord Buddha

The different names used to refer to the Lord Buddha are the Lord Buddha, Phra Sammasambuddha, The Blessed One Who Possesses Bhaga, the Great Teacher, the Tathagatha, Dhammakaya, Brahmakaya, Dhammabhuta, Brahmabhuta, Defeater of Mara, Phra Arahantaanantajina, Phra Jina, Phra Jinasiha, Phra Sabbannubuddha, the Perfectly Enlightened One, etc. The meaning of each of these names will be briefly described as follows:

¹ *Suttantapiṭaka Aṅguttaranikāya Catukanipāṭa. Doṇa Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 35, no. 36, p. 136-138

² *Paramatthajotika Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Khuddakapāṭha.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 39, p. 8

1. **The Lord Buddha:** This name has the same meaning as “Buddha” but with an added expression of admiration.
2. **Phra Sammasambuddha:** The word “Samma” means rightfully or correctly. The word “Sam” means by himself or without being taught. Therefore, the term Phra Sammasambuddha emphasizes the fact that the Lord Buddha is self-enlightened.
3. **The Blessed One Who Possesses Bhaga:** This name is used to express admiration for the Lord Buddha.³
4. **The Great Teacher:** This name is self-explanatory.
5. **Defeater of Mara:** This name comes from the fact that the Lord Buddha was able to overwhelm the Mara force which tried to prevent Him from attaining Self-Enlightenment.
6. **Phra Arahantaanantajina:** The ascetic “Upakajivaka” once asked the Lord Buddha, “Why do you refer to yourself as ‘Arahantaanantajina’?” The Lord Buddha answered, “A person being devoid of defilements such as myself is called ‘Jina’ because I have victory over all unwholesomeness.”⁴ The word “Ananta” refers to Nibbana.⁵ Therefore, a person who has victory over defilements is destined for Nibbana.
7. **Phra Jina:** It means having victory over Mara⁶ or having victory over all unwholesomeness.
8. **Phra Jinasiha:** It means being a victor. A Rajasiha is the king of all animals. Likewise, the Lord Buddha is the king of all human beings and all celestial beings.
9. **Phra Sabbannubuddha:** The word “Sabbannu” means all-knowing. It means that the Lord Buddha is all-knowing. However, He is not all-knowing at all times but only when He wishes to investigate a certain subject. He has ready access to the details of any subject.
10. **The Perfectly Enlightened One:** This term is used to refer to the Lord Buddha in the third person.
11. **Brahmakaya:** It was written in the Commentary, “The name Brahmakaya means having the Dhamma for the body. The Dhamma is called Brahma because the Dhamma is sublime.”⁷

³ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Mahānidāna*. Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Press, vol. 29, no. 84, p. 248

⁴ *Suttantapiṭaka Majjhimanikāya Mūlapaṇṇāsa. Pasarasi Sutta*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 18, no. 325, p. 424

⁵ *Aparadutiyaḍḍhāsaṅgaṇik Vaṇṇana Aṭṭhakathā-vinayapiṭaka*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 10, p. 935

⁶ *Visuddhahajhonvilāsini Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Apadāna*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 71, p. 203

⁷ *Sumamgalavilāsini Aṭṭhakathā-dīgha-nikāya Pāṭikavagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 15, p. 176

12. **Dhammabhuta:** It was written in the Commentary, “Dhammabhuta means possessing the Dhamma state.”⁸
13. **Dhammakaya:** It means Buddharatana. Every great Bodhisatta can attain Self-Enlightenment and becomes the Buddha because He has practiced meditation until He can attain Dhammakaya.
14. **Brahmabhuta:** It was written in the Commentary that Brahmabhuta means possessing the most sublime state.⁹
15. **The Tathagatha:** This term is used because the Lord Buddha’s enlightened knowledge is Truth. In other words, He sees Truth, He speaks Truth, and His action is Truth...¹⁰

5.1.3 The Different Types of Buddha

“Buddha” can be divided into four different types: Sutabuddha, Catusaccabuddha, Paccekabuddha, and Sabbannubuddha.¹¹

1. **Sutabuddha:** Sutabuddha means a scholarly monk who has learnt many of the Lord Buddha’s Sayings as in the case of Phra Ananda Thera. Sutabuddha also means a monk who is learnt in the Tripitaka. According to the Commentary, a Sutabuddha does not have to attain Enlightenment but has to be a scholar of the Dhamma.
2. **Catusaccabuddha:** It means a monk who has attained the Four Noble Truths and extinguished all defilements. A Catusaccabuddha can also be called an Anubuddha which means one who has attained Enlightenment after the manner of the Lord Buddha.
3. **Paccekabuddha:** It means a personage who has attained Self-Enlightenment but does not teach his enlightened knowledge to anyone.
4. **Sabbannubuddha:** It means a personage who has attained Self-Enlightenment and teaches it to others as in the case of the Lord Gautama Buddha. Therefore, only the personage who founds Buddhism can be called Phra Sabbannubuddha but most Buddhists are more familiar with the name Phra Sammasambuddha.

There are three different types of Phra Sabbannubuddha. These include: **Phra Pannadhikabuddha** (the Lord Buddha who excels in the area of wisdom), **Phra Saddhadhikabuddha** (the Lord Buddha who excels in the area of faith), and **Phra Viriyadhikabuddha** (the Lord Buddha who excels in the area of endeavor).

⁸ *Aṭṭhakathā-aṅguttaranikāya Dasakanipāṭa. Aṭṭhakathā-tatiyaadhamma Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 38, p. 370

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ *Papañcasudhanī Aṭṭhakathā-Majjhimanikāya Mūlapaṇṇāsa. Aṭṭhakathā-Pariyāya Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 17, p. 105

¹¹ *Manorothpuranī Aṭṭhakathā-aṅguttaranikāya Ekanipāṭa.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 32, p. 213

5.1.4 Anyone Can Aspire to Buddhahood

Whoever aspires to Buddhahood must accumulate merit and pursue Perfections earnestly until his Perfections have reached the fullest extent for a particular type of Buddha. Luang Pu Wat Paknam told us that there are countless Buddhas dwelling in Nibbana. They appear in Nibbana as Phra Dhammakaya. It is for this reason that our Lord Buddha says, “This is the teaching of all the Buddhas,”¹² when He gave the Ovadapatimokkha lecture to His Perfected Disciples. “All the Buddhas” mean the Buddhas in the past, present, and future. Within this “Buddhavamsa” (the History of the Buddhas), twenty five names were mentioned starting from the Lord Dipankara Buddha all the way to the Lord Gautama Buddha. These are the Buddhas in recent history but before them they had been countless personages who had attained Self-Enlightenment as the Buddha. And in the future there will also be countless personages who will attain Self-Enlightenment as the Buddha.

An individual who aspires to Buddhahood is called a “Bodhisatta”. Bodhisatta means a living being who aspires to Buddhahood. All Bodhisattas start out as an ordinary human being. The only difference is that a Bodhisatta earnestly and continuously works on improving himself by boldly and staunchly pursuing Perfections all throughout the countless lifetimes. Eventually when his Perfections have reached the fullest extent he attains Self-Enlightenment and becomes the Buddha. As a Buddha, He can found Buddhism as well as teaching other living beings to attain Enlightenment in the same way that He has. It should be obvious that a person becomes the Buddha through his own endeavors. It is for this reason that anyone can aspire to Buddhahood.

In different theistic religions, it is taught that God designates a divine messenger to represent him. Therefore, the person to assume this position of divine messenger has been specifically chosen by God. For example, Allah designates Mohammed as his representative on earth as the founder of Islam.¹³ It was written in the Koran that there have been altogether 25 such divine messengers and Mohammed is the most recent one. Allah will not send any more divine messengers.¹⁴ In Zoroastrianism, Ahura Mazda designated Zoroaster as His divine messenger and he was to establish his religion here on earth.¹⁵ In Sikhism, Guru Nanak went to practice meditation in the forest when God handed him a cup of divine water. He then told Nanak to drink it and to establish Sikhism.¹⁶

¹² *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Gāthā-Dhammapada*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 42, no. 24, p. 276

¹³ Associate Professor Feun Dokbua. *Sartsana Prebteab* [Comparison of Religions], B.E. 2539, p. 205

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 208

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 77

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 229

5.2 The Buddha-Virtues

5.2.1 The Buddha-Virtues Are Incomparable

The Pali word for virtue is “Guna”. It means goodness and worth. Therefore, the Buddha-Virtues mean the Lord Buddha’s goodness and worth.

The Lord Buddha says, “Were a Buddha to extol the Buddha-Virtues for an entire Kappa,¹⁷ the Kappa will end long before the Buddha-Virtues can be properly extolled.”¹⁸ Amidst the suffering of the round of rebirth, no one else can show us the way out of suffering the way the Lord Buddha can. Moreover, the attainment of Buddhahood is as difficult as swimming across a sea of boiling molten copper.

What the Lord Buddha has to say about the Buddha-Virtues is never about self-praise. But He says it because it is the truth, for such a personage as the Lord Buddha, who is devoid of defilements, can never speak falsehood.

The Lord Buddha says, “Behold, monks, when you hear others praise me, the Dhamma or the Sangha, you should not feel overjoyed. You should consider how their praises are true because the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha are indeed praiseworthy.”¹⁹

“Behold, monks, when you hear others find faults with me, the Dhamma or the Sangha, you should not harbor thoughts of revenge against them. You should consider how their words are not true because the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha are not blameworthy.”²⁰

This saying of the Lord Buddha shows that He wishes people to talk about the Buddha-Virtues in a way that reflects the truth. Whether someone praises or finds faults with the Triple Gem, we should be neither overjoyed nor overwrought, but to consider whether what is being said is true and if not we can then help the person to understand why what he said was false.

It is a fact that the Lord Buddha did not speak of Himself only in terms of praises but He has given us plenty of examples of the mistakes made during the existences as a Bodhisatta while He was working toward Buddhahood. These accounts are given in the Jataka stories. In many of His previous existences, our Lord Buddha had been reborn in the Animal Realm as a dog, an elephant, a horse, a monkey, a Rajasiha, a bird, a rabbit, an ox, a water buffalo, a deer, etc. In other previous existences, He had made some grave mistakes which caused him to have to spend an unimaginably long time in the Hell Realm. Actually, if the Lord Buddha did not talk about these mistakes, nobody would have known about them. The reason the Lord Buddha told us about His past mistakes is so that we can learn from them. Our Lord Buddha’s past mistakes serve to remind us to exercise heedfulness.

¹⁷ **Kappa** is the unit of time that is so long as to be incalculable.

¹⁸ *Paramatthadīpanī Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Udāna. Aṭṭhakathā-āhu Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 44, p. 609

¹⁹ *Suttantapiṭaka Dīgha-nikāya Sīlakhandhavagga. Brahmajāla Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 11, no. 1, p. 3-4

²⁰ Ibid.

The fact that the Lord Buddha openly talked about the mistakes, which had been made in many of His previous existences, goes to show that He speaks only truth. Being devoid of defilements, He had nothing to gain by doing otherwise. In addition, He was not concerned about preserving a perfect image in the way that ordinary people tend to be.

5.2.3 The Buddha-Virtues

Although the Buddha-Virtues can never be adequately described, here only nine of them will be presented. Buddhists, who chant regularly, are familiar with the Pali words for these virtues but may not know their meaning. Buddhists are familiar with the sacred verse, “Araham sammāsambuddho vijjācaranasampanno sugato lokavidu anuttaro purisadammasārathi sattha devamanussanam buddho bhagava”²¹ Most of us know this sacred verse by heart and now we can learn about its meaning.

1. The Meaning of “Araham”

“Araham” means an Arahāt. Here it means that the Lord Buddha is an Arahāt.

“Araham” has two meanings: “distant” and “deserving”.

“Distant” means being distant from defilements; that is, the Lord Buddha is so very far removed from defilements, unlike ordinary people who are still immersed in them.

“Deserving” means being worthy of the four requisites; being worthy of the deepest reverence; being worthy of our obedience.²²

2. The Meaning of “Sammāsambuddho”

“Sammāsambuddho” means the Lord Buddha.

“Sammāsambuddho” means the attainment of Self-Enlightenment.²³

The Dhamma or the Lord Buddha’s Teachings come from the Triple Gem which dwells inside the body of the Lord Buddha. In theistic teachings, all knowledge comes from God through his divine messenger. Jesus says, “I know God because I came from God and I am God’s instrument...what I teach does not come from myself but from God.”²⁴

²¹ *Vattathupama Sutta Suttantapiṭaka Majjhimanikāya Mūlapaṇṇāsa*. Siamrath Pali Language, vol. 12, no. 95, p. 67

²² *Paṭhamasamantapasādikaplar Buddhagunagāthā Aṭṭhakathā-vinayapiṭaka*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 1, p. 185

Phrabhavanaviriyakhun. *Buddhagūṇa, Dhammagūṇa, Saṅghagūṇa*, B.E. 2551, p. 35, 43

²³ *VerañjakaṇḍaVaṇṇa Aṭṭhakathā-vinayapiṭaka*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 1, p. 191

²⁴ Associate Professor Feun Dokbua. *Sartsana Prebteab* [Comparison of Religions], B.E. 2539, p. 70

Mohammed also received words from Allah in three different ways: through inspiration, through dreams, and through divine messengers.²⁵

In Judaism, Moses led the Jews from Egypt across the Red Sea to Canaan or present-day Israel. After crossing the Red Sea, the Jewish people had to travel for three months and still could not reach Canaan. This caused the people to become discouraged and disrespectful to Moses. Moses feared the worst so he went up to Mount Sinai and stayed there for 40 days. Upon his return, Moses told the Jewish people that he had gone up the mountain to meet God and God had given him the Ten Commandments which every Jew must follow without exception. These include you shall have no other gods before me as well as the rules for living together as a tribe.²⁶

3. The Meaning of “Vijjacaranasampanno”

“Vijjacaranasampanno” means possessing “Vijja” and “Carana”.

“Vijja” means penetrating knowledge or Higher Knowledge and includes “Vijja-8”. Penetrating knowledge is the knowledge, which is gained through meditation practice. It is different from the kind of knowledge, which is gained from listening, reading, or thinking.

“Carana” means conduct and includes “Carana-15”.

Vijja-8 includes:

1. Vipassananana: It means penetrating insight. The Lord Buddha sees things for what they really are. For example, He sees how the Five Aggregates or Khandha-5 possesses the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and the absence of true selfhood. The Lord Buddha sees how the Five Aggregates cause all living beings to be trapped within the round of rebirth. Penetrating insight does not come from seeing with the physical eyes but it comes from seeing with the Dhammakaya-Eye.
2. Manomayiddhi: It means psychic power or the ability to create mind-made objects.
3. Iddhividhi: It means supernormal powers. These include the ability to create many bodies out of one body.
4. Dibbasota: It means divine ear. This is the ability to hear different sounds in faraway places.
5. Cetopariyanana: It means the ability to read other people’s mind.
6. Pubbenivasanussatinana: It means the ability to recall one’s previous existences.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 205

²⁶ Ibid., p. 56-57

7. Dibbacakku: It means divine eye or the ability to see everything near and far as well as the ability to recall other people's previous lives.
8. Asavakkhayanana: It means the penetrating knowledge which causes all defilements to be extinguished.

Carana-15 includes:

1. Silasamvara: It means restraint according to the Patimokkha.
 2. Indriyasamvara: It means restraint of the six senses: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.
 3. Bhojanemattannuta: It means exercising moderation when eating.
 4. Jagariyanuyoga: It means practicing wakefulness.
- 5 – 15: These can be summarized as follows: The Lord Buddha possesses insight and graceful conduct. He had practiced Carana-15 all throughout many of His previous existences. Carana-15 is the very basis which allows each great Bodhisatta to continue pursuing Perfections in a steadfast manner and over countless lifetimes until eventually He can attain Buddhahood.

In summary, “Vijjacaranasampanno” means possessing both knowledge and good conduct. Our Lord Buddha is the Greatest Teacher who can instruct and lead all of His pupils to possess both knowledge and good conduct in the same way that He does. There are many teachers in the world who possess knowledge but not good conduct. These teachers can instruct their pupils but they cannot lead them because they are not good role models.

4. The Meaning of “Sugato”

“Sugato” means faring well, going to a good place, walking in a graceful manner, etc.

The first meaning of faring well: The Lord Buddha possesses good conduct in body, word, and mind. He had consistently performed wholesome deeds all throughout the countless existences and these wholesome deeds caused Him to be reborn in the States of Happiness.

The second meaning of faring well: The Lord Buddha practices the Noble Eightfold Path.

The meaning of going to a good place: The Lord Buddha has gone to Nibbana.

The meaning of walking in a graceful manner: At the time when the Lord Buddha went to save the Five Ascetics at the Deer Park, His walk was so graceful and His personal radiance was so brilliant that even the animals that saw Him had to stop still as if stunned.

5. The Meaning of “Lokavidu”

“Lokavidu” means penetrating “Loka” or the world. The word “Loka” means deterioration, destruction.²⁷

Another meaning of “Loka” is the dwelling of living beings, the place in which wholesome and unwholesome deeds are performed. One example of Loka is the Human Realm. When human beings perform wholesome deeds in the Human Realm, after they die they will be reborn in the Celestial Realm. Human beings also have the opportunity to pursue Perfections to the fullest extent for the purpose of attaining Nibbana. However, when human beings commit unwholesome deeds, after they die they will be reborn in the Hell Realm.

Loka is divided into three parts, namely, Sankharaloka, Sattavaloka, and Okasaloka.

Sankharaloka: Sankharaloka includes the Five Aggregates or Khanda-5²⁸. The Five Aggregates are considered to be “Loka” because they undergo deterioration and destruction. The Five Aggregates are sustained by food. It is for this reason that Sankharaloka is translated as Loka conditioned by food.²⁹ The Lord Buddha knows about Khanda-5 in far greater details than modern day physicians because He has the Dhammakaya-Eye, which can see things with a greater resolution than the most advanced instruments.

Sattavaloka: It means living beings such as human beings, celestial beings, Form Brahma Beings, Non-Form Brahma Beings, etc. Our Lord Buddha possesses penetrating knowledge about living beings because He knows about their temperament, their behavior, their emotions, whether they possess a low level of defilements or a high level of defilements, whether they possess a strong Indriya (sense-faculties) or a weak Indriya...³⁰

Each individual’s temperament and attitude are personal traits, which have been with the individual across lifetimes. Therefore, Sattavaloka can be defined as the ability to penetrate each living being’s personal traits. Armed with such knowledge, when it is time to give a Dhamma lecture, the lecturer knows to talk about the Dhamma topic which suits the listener’s temperament and attitude.

²⁷ *Paramatthadīpanī Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Itivuttaka. Aṭṭhakathā-loka Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 45, p. 726

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro). **The 69th Dhamma Lecture**, Part 2 on *Buddhagūṇa, Dhammagūṇa, Saṅghagūṇa*, B.E. 2538, p. 42

³⁰ *Paramatthajotika Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Suttanipāṭa.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 47, p. 531

Okasaloka: It means the dwelling of living beings.³¹ This includes our earth and our Cakkavala. It was written, “Cakkavala is Okasaloka.”³² Nowadays, we know that Cakkavala is the same as a galaxy. Astronomers first discovered the existence of galaxies about 400 years ago but the Lord Buddha talked about galaxies and an infinite number of galaxies more than 2,500 years ago. The Lord Buddha says, “There are four things that an ordinary person cannot know or count. These include living beings, air, galaxies, and the incomparable Buddha-Insight...”³³ The Lord Buddha possesses penetrating knowledge about Loka.

6. The Meaning of “Anuttaro purisadammasarathi”

“Anuttaro purisadammasarathi” means the peerless trainer of human beings.³⁴ It means that the Lord Buddha possesses the unusual gift of teaching people to be wholesome. He has the ability to guide us toward the Path and Fruit of Nibbana. Our Lord Buddha knows how to use different clever teaching techniques to suit His audience as seen in the cases of the three Jadila brothers and Phra Nanda.

The three Jadila brothers were formerly fire-worshipping ascetics; therefore, the Lord Buddha gave them a Dhamma lecture called the Adittapariyaya Sutta. This Sutta has to do with the different sources of heat and it was the content of this lecture which led these three ascetics to attain Arahatsip.

Phra Nanda was at one point dominated by passion; therefore, the Lord Buddha took him to the celestial realm of Tavatimsa so that he could look upon female celestial beings. The Lord Buddha told him that if he practiced meditation in earnest and died before his defilements had been extinguished he would have one of these female celestial beings for a wife. Phra Nanda did as the Lord Buddha suggested and practiced meditation until he eventually attained Arahatsip and forgot all about female celestial beings.

³¹ *Madhurattavilāsiniṃ Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Buddhavong*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 73, p. 213

³² *Paramatthadīpanī Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Udāna*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 44, p. 362

³³ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Buddhavong Ratanacāṅkamanakaṇḍa*. Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Press, vol. 33, no. 64, p. 564

³⁴ *Paṭhamasamantapasādikaplar Aṭṭhakathā-vinayapiṭaka*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 1, p. 201-203

7. The Meaning of “Sattha devamanussanam”

“Sattha devamanussanam” means being the Great Teacher of celestial beings and human beings.³⁵ The Lord Buddha is not only the Great Teacher of human beings but of celestial beings as well. It was written about the Lord Buddha’s routine that “During the middle watch, the Most Exalted One answers celestial beings’ questions.”³⁶ The middle watch is between 22:00 hours and 02:00 hours. Celestial beings here include Form Brahma beings as well.

This particular virtue of the Lord Buddha is one of many outstanding features of Buddhism. Unlike Buddhism, adherents of theism worship celestial beings. In Christianity, it says that Jehovah has a divine body.³⁷ In Islam, it says that Allah has a divine body; therefore, nobody can see him...³⁸ In Brahmanism-Hinduism, the Brahma being is regarded as the highest refuge and it is believed that life’s destiny depends on the Brahma being. And yet, there were a large number of mentions in the Tripitaka that many Brahma beings regard the Lord Buddha as their Great Teacher.³⁹

8. The Meaning of “Buddho”

“Buddho” means many things but here it is taken to mean one who has bloomed in the same way that a lotus flower has completely bloomed. During the time that our Bodhisatta was looking for ways to attain Self-Enlightenment he could be compared to a lotus bud but after His Self-Enlightenment, He could be compared to a lotus flower.

The reason the lotus flower is used to compare with “Buddho” is that after the earth was reformed, there happened on earth five lotus flowers. The Brahma king, the sovereign of the five Brahma realms of “Suddhavasa” understood the happening to mean that in this Kappa, there would happen altogether five Buddhas. Therefore, he said, “Na Mo Bud Dha Ya”: “Na” for the Lord Kakusandho Buddha, “Mo” for the Lord Konagamana Buddha, “Bud” for the Lord Kassapa Buddha, “Dha” for the Lord Gautama Buddha, and “Ya” for the Lord Maitreya Buddha.⁴⁰

³⁵ *Suttantapiṭaka Aṅguttaranikāya Tikanipāta. Venāga Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 34, no. 503, p. 300

³⁶ *Sumamgalavilāsini Aṭṭhakathā-dīgha-nikāya Sīlakhandhavagga. Aṭṭhakathā- brahmajāla Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 11, p. 151

³⁷ Associate Professor Pheun Dokbua. *Sartsana Prebteab* [Comparison of Religions], B.E. 2539, p. 195

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 203

³⁹ *Vinayapiṭaka Mahāvagga Part I*, Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 6, no. 8, p. 30

⁴⁰ Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro). *The 69th Dhamma Lecture*, Part 2 on *Buddhaguṇa, Dhammaguṇa, Saṅghaguṇa*, B.E.2538, p. 537-548

9. The Meaning of “Bhagava”

“Bhagava” has different meanings. It can mean to break. It can also mean to explain.

It means “To break” as in the Lord Buddha’s round of rebirth has been broken. That is, He has broken free of Avijja (ignorance), Tanha (craving), Upadana (attachment), which cause each living being to be trapped within the round of rebirth. The round of rebirth includes the Sense Sphere, the Form Sphere, and the Non-Form Sphere. The Lord Buddha has been emancipated from these three spheres and has gone to live in Nibbana.

It means “To explain” as in the Lord Buddha has explained His enlightened knowledge in such a way that it is easy for His audience to understand. Our Lord Buddha’s way of explaining His enlightened knowledge can be compared to providing smaller bites of food to children, larger bites of food to adults, easily digestible food to the sick, etc. However, for those equipped with a huge intellect, the mere mention of a Dhamma topic is enough to help them attain the different stages of Enlightenment. Moreover, the Dhamma topics, which have been simplified and explained in detail, can benefit Buddhists of later generations and enable them to practice the teachings.

These nine virtues of the Lord Buddha can be further simplified to give the three virtues of purity, wisdom, and compassion.

Purity includes Araham, Sugato, and Buddhho.

Wisdom includes Sammasambuddho, Vijjacaranasampanno, and Lokavidu.

Compassion includes Anuttaro purisadammasarathi, Sattha devamanussanam, and Bhagava.

5.3 The Lord Buddha's History

Over 2,500 years ago, an infant who possessed the thirty-two physical attributes of the Perfect Man was born into the royal family that ruled Kapilavastu. His father's name was King Suddhodana. His mother's name was Queen Sirimahamaya. She was the former princess of the Koliya House that ruled Devadaha. When she was ten months pregnant, she left her husband's home in order to give birth to her child in Devadaha as was customarily done at the time. Having traveled half the distance between Kapilavastu and Devadaha and while in the wood of "Lumbini", the queen felt the birth pang and later gave birth to her male infant under a large tree. The birth took place near midday on the 15th day of the 6th waxing moon 80 years before the Buddhist Era.

Five days after the infant prince was born, King Suddhodana invited 108 Brahmin scholars to come for a meal at the royal palace. Out of these 108 Brahmin scholars, there were eight who were experts in making predictions based on an individual's physical features. These eight Brahmins were asked to make a prediction about the infant prince's future and to give him a name.

Seven of the Brahmin scholars made two predictions about the infant prince. They said that if the prince remained a householder, he would become a Universal Monarch. But if he took up the religious life, he would attain Self-Enlightenment and become the Lord Buddha. One Brahmin scholar, the youngest of the eight, made only one prediction. He said that the infant prince would definitely take up the religious life and attain Self-Enlightenment to become the Lord Buddha. All eight Brahmin scholars agreed that the infant prince's name should be "Siddhattha" or "Siddharatha" which means wish fulfillment. Two days later when the infant prince was just seven days old, Queen Sirimahamaya passed away. Therefore, Prince Siddhattha was raised by Queen Mahapajabadi who was his aunt and King Suddhodana's second queen.

Queen Mahapajabadi gave birth to Prince Nanda and Princess Rupananda. Therefore, Prince Siddhattha had a half-brother and a half-sister. He also had many cousins belonging to the Sakya House who were of a similar age. Prince Mahanama and Prince Anuruddha were the sons of Prince Siddhattha's uncle, Prince Sukakodana. Prince Ananda was the son of Prince Amitodana. And Prince Devadat was the son of Prince Siddhattha's aunt, Princess Amita. Prince Mahanama was the only cousin that was older than Prince Siddhattha. When Prince Siddhattha was seven years old, he was educated by the royal court's Brahmin scholars. Seeing that his son was brilliant, King Suddhodana sent Prince Siddhattha to be educated by the Visavamitra masters. They were the foremost scholars in their fields in those days. Prince Siddhattha was able to learn everything from these masters very quickly and he was poised to assume the throne as a Universal Monarch in the future.

When the prince was sixteen years old, his father thought it was time for him to marry and the person the king had in mind for his son was Princess Yasodhara or Bimba. Princess Yasodhara was the daughter of King Suppabuddha and Queen Amita. The prince and princess were married and they later had a son named “Rahula”. Their life together was a happy and abundant one. The king made sure that the prince had every comfort in life because he wanted his son to remain a householder for the rest of his life. The king wanted his son to become a Universal Monarch.

However, Prince Siddhattha’s accumulated merit and Perfections caused him to see the four celestial messengers that included an old person, a sick person, a dead person, and a monk. These images served to remind the prince of the suffering inherent in every life such that he wished to find the way out of suffering by taking up the religious life as a monk. Finally when the prince was 29 years old, he decided to become a monk by leaving the palace on his steed, “Kanthaka” and accompanied by his page “Channa”. When they arrived at the bank of the Anoma River, the prince cut off his top knot and took up the religious life as a monk.

Later, the prince-monk went to study under the Yogis Alara and Udaka respectively. He had learnt all that could be learnt from both Yogis but he knew that the knowledge gained could not lead him to attain Self-Enlightenment. Therefore, he decided to go and find the way out of suffering by himself. He had tried different methods popular among the ascetics at the time especially self-mortification. After six years of extreme endeavoring, he was still nowhere near attaining Self-Enlightenment. Finally, the prince-monk decided to practice meditation according to the Middle Way. This led him to attain Phra Dhammakaya and the Four Noble Truths. As a result, he became self-enlightened as the Lord Buddha on the 15th day of the 6th waxing moon forty-five years before the Buddhist Era.

The Lord Buddha’s birth, Self-Enlightenment, and the attainment of Complete Nibbana fall on the same day, which is the 15th day of the 6th waxing moon. Buddhists know this day as “Visakha Puja Day” or the Lord Buddha’s day.

After Self-Enlightenment, the Lord Buddha went far and wide to teach all living beings as well as people of every caste: Brahmin, Vaisya, Sudra, and half-caste. These people undertook ordination and practiced according to the Lord Buddha’s Teachings until they could attain the different stages of Enlightenment. Multitudes proclaimed themselves as Buddhists. The Lord Buddha had used different teaching techniques which suited the character and level of knowledge of each individual such that His audiences could easily understand the teachings and attain the different stages of Enlightenment. The Lord Buddha had spent forty-five years establishing Buddhism in India. He attained Complete Nibbana on the 15th day of the 6th waxing moon when He was eighty years old.

The details of our Lord Buddha's life history had been well recorded. Moreover, there are many evidences which confirm the reality of our Lord Buddha in the forms of ancient texts, ancient sites, and ancient objects. Before taking up the religious life, Prince Siddhattha had experienced the highest level of worldly happiness. He possessed corporeality endowments, material wealth, and desirable attributes. And it was only a matter of time before he became a Universal Monarch having dominion of the four human worlds. In terms of corporeality endowments, he possessed all the thirty-two physical features of the Perfect Man. His physical form was superior to that of any celestial being or Brahma being. In the unimaginably long period of a Kappa, at the very most there can be born only five personages who have the physical form of the Perfect Man.

The special characteristics possessed by the Lord Buddha cannot be found in any other religious leaders. No other religious leaders possess the physical form of the Perfect Man. Only the great Bodhisatta who can attain Self-Enlightenment and become the Lord Buddha has the Perfect Man body.

More importantly, Self-Enlightenment cannot be attained through thinking as in the discovery of different scientific theories. Self-Enlightenment can only be attained through "Bhavanamayapanna" which results from meditation practice where the mind is kept absolutely still in a thought-free state. The Lord Buddha says, "The Dhamma that I have attained is profound. It is difficult to see, and difficult to know. It is tranquil and exquisite. It cannot be attained by thinking..."⁴¹ The last sentence comes from the Pali words "Atakkavacaro" which means it cannot be discovered by thinking. It can be discovered only by Nana or Supernormal Insight⁴² which arises out of "Bhavanamayapanna".

At the time when Luang Pu Wat Paknam attained Phra Dhammakaya, he had the same thing to say, "Gambhīrocayam". The Dhamma is this profound, who can ever think it? It is beyond thought and imagination. As long as one is still thinking and imagining, one will never attain the Dhamma. One must stop thinking altogether. Once the mind comes to a standstill, it is extinguished. Once the mind has been extinguished, it is reborn. As long as the mind is not extinguished, it cannot be reborn. This is a real phenomenon. This is the juncture. If it is not done in just the right way, one will never be able to attain it."

⁴¹ *Vinayapiṭaka Mahāvagga Part I*, Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 68, no. 7, p. 29

⁴² *Sāraṭhapakathāsini Aṭṭhakathā-samyuttanikāya Sagāthavagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 68, no. 7, p. 29

5.4 The Pursuit of Perfections for the Attainment of Buddhahood

5.4.1 The Meaning and Types of Bodhisattas

The Pali word “Bodhisatta” means a living being that will attain Self-Enlightenment or a living being that deserves to attain the Buddha-Insight.⁴³ It also means a person who pursues Perfections for the sake of Buddhahood. The term “living beings” can be human beings or animals. The reason is in some existences a Bodhisatta may be reborn in the Animal Realm as an elephant, a horse, an ox, a Phya Naga, a bird, etc. The term “Buddha-Insight” means the supernormal insight which leads a Bodhisatta to attain Self-Enlightenment.

Another meaning of “Bodhisatta” is a person who aspires to Buddhahood.

There are two types of Bodhisattas: Aniyatabodhisatta and Niyatabodhisatta

1. **Aniyatabodhisatta:** It means a Bodhisatta who may or may not attain Buddhahood because he has not pursued Perfections to an optimum level just yet. As a result, he has not received the Buddha-Forecast, which says that he will attain Buddhahood at a certain time in the future.
2. **Niyatabodhisatta:** It means a Bodhisatta who will definitely attain Buddhahood because he has already pursued Perfections to an optimum level. Moreover, he has met a Buddha and that Buddha has given him the Buddha-Forecast which says that he will attain Buddhahood at a certain time in the future.

This Buddha begins by checking the level of Perfections which the Bodhisatta has pursued throughout his countless lifetimes to see if they are at an optimum level. If they are then the Lord Buddha will give the Bodhisatta the Buddha-Forecast. If they are not, then the Lord Buddha will not give the Bodhisatta the Buddha-Forecast just yet. Therefore, the Buddha-Forecast is the way to announce formally to the world that the particular Bodhisatta will definitely attain Buddhahood at the stated time in the future.

This is not unlike a person training to be a teacher in the secular world where he needs to have a teaching certificate before he can teach in school. He must first take all the required courses necessary to receive the certificate that qualifies him as a teacher.

⁴³ *Paramatthajotika Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Suttanipāta*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 47, p. 636

5.4.2 What Causes the Birth of a Bodhisatta?

There are at least two factors which make a person want to become a Bodhisatta. Firstly, he has seen the Lord Buddha. Secondly, he realizes the fact that life is full of suffering and he wishes to put an end to suffering.

1. Having Seen the Different Lord Buddhas in His Previous Existences

A person that bears witness to the supernatural event in which the Lord Buddha opens up the Celestial Realm, the Hell Realm, and the Human Realm tends to want to become a Bodhisatta. During the time of our Lord Gautama Buddha, on one occasion He went to deliver the Abhidhamma to His late mother in the celestial realm of Tavatimsa. After the Rains-Retreat ended, our Lord Buddha told King Sakka of the Tavatimsa Realm that He wished to return to the Human Realm.

King Sakka created three different kinds of stairs in order for the Lord Buddha to descend to earth. There were the stairs of gold, the stairs of precious gems, and the stairs of silver. The foot of these stairs was at the gate of Sankassa City and the top of the stairs was at the top of the Great Mount Sineru which is the location of the Tavatimsa Realm. The three different sets of stairs lay side by side with the gold stairs on the right for celestial beings, the silver stairs on the left for Brahma beings, and the stairs of precious gems in the middle for the Lord Buddha.

Before the Lord Buddha descended from the Celestial Realm, He stood at the top of the Great Mount Sineru and caused the living beings in the Three Spheres of existence to be able to see each other. In other words, human beings can see celestial beings. Celestial beings can see human beings. Human beings can see Form Brahma beings and Non-Form Brahma beings. They can see hell beings, Petas, Asurakayas and the hell beings, and Petas, and Asurakayas can see them.

As the Lord Buddha descended the stairs of precious gems, He expressed His personal radiance which consisted of light in six different colors. He was surrounded by high-ranking Brahma beings and celestial beings as well as all the celestial beings from every celestial realm. On that day at Sankassa City, the Buddhist Communities and the town people gathered together to welcome the Lord Buddha. The area covering 36 yojana⁴⁴ or 576 kilometers in length was packed with people.

What the people saw on that day gave them a clear understanding about the Law of Kamma. They realized that death was not the end and that hell and heaven did exist. In other words, the people that witnessed this supernatural event developed Right View. Having seen the glorious form of the Lord Buddha descending from the Celestial Realm, many people on that day made the decision to aspire to Buddhahood. It was written in the Commentary, “On that day all the human beings within the area covering a distance of 576

⁴⁴ **Yojana** is a measure of length. 1 yojana is equivalent to 10 miles or 16 kilometres.

kilometers wished to become self-enlightened as a Buddha sometime in the distant future.”⁴⁵

Therefore, on the day that the Lord Buddha unveiled the Three Spheres, there happened a large number of Bodhisattas. It was said that one particular Phya Naga, which lived under the Mekong in Poanvisai Amphoe of Nongkai Province, saw the supernormal event and wished to become a Buddha. This is the same Phya Naga, which together with his attendants, have come to release the floating fireballs every year on the Rains-Exit Day to commemorate the day of the great Buddha-Miracle. These Phya Nagas have practiced renunciation throughout the entire Rains-Retreat, and the merit accumulated from their renunciation practice makes it possible for them to release floating fireballs from their body through the water and up into the air. They have done this every year to commemorate the day of the great Buddha-Miracle and to pay homage to the Lord Buddha.

It can be seen that Bodhisattas happen as a result of having seen the Lord Buddha and His exemplary conduct. The Buddha-Tradition of unveiling the Three Spheres can be said to be the very means to encourage living beings to aspire to Buddhahood by becoming a Bodhisatta. Such an aspiration keeps each Bodhisatta on course in his pursuit of Perfections lifetimes after lifetimes. If a Bodhisatta does not change his mind along the way, he will definitely become Self-Enlightened as a Buddha when his Perfections have been pursued to the fullest extent.

Another point worth noting is that every venerable monk, who has been recognized by the Lord Buddha as being the most excellent in a particular area, has all seen role models somewhere in his previous lives. In other words, he has witnessed a Lord Buddha recognizing a particular monk as being the most excellent in a particular area. Having witnessed the incident, he felt inspired to receive the same recognition sometime in the distant future. Therefore, he earnestly accumulates merit and pursues Perfections throughout his subsequent lifetimes. Each time he makes merit he makes the resolute wish to one day be recognized by a future Buddha as being the most excellent in that particular area. This wish will come to fruition once he has pursued Perfections to the fullest extent.

2. Realizing How Life Is Full of Suffering and Wanting to Put an End to It

Having undergone the round of rebirth for countless lifetimes, an individual begins to accumulate enough wisdom to know that life in the round of rebirth is full of suffering. This knowledge prompts him to wish to escape from suffering. Moreover, he has either met the Lord Buddha or learnt about His Teachings throughout his many previous lifetimes. This enables him to know about the Law of Kamma and to develop Right View. Most importantly, he knows that if he wants to find the way out of suffering and help others to do the same, he must aspire to Buddhahood.

⁴⁵ *Dhammapadaṭṭhakāthā* *Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya* *Gāthā-Dhammapada*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 42, p. 316-317

Phrabhavanaviriyakhun (Luang Por Dattajeevo) said that all Bodhisattas are magnanimous individuals. They believe in goodness to an extraordinary degree. They do not wish to escape the round of rebirth alone but they hope to help others escape as well even if it means that they will have to spend countless more lifetimes in their pursuit of Perfections. Learning to be magnanimous and believing in goodness can happen only when a Bodhisatta can live in an environment which teaches him these things since childhood. All of us are born ignorant; therefore, our environment plays a very important role in instilling good habits in us and helping us to learn the truth about life and the world. Our environment can be divided into people and nature.

People who make up our environment should be good and decent. They should be the kind of people that stand by us through thick and thin. It is the goodness of the people around us that teaches us about gratitude. Gratitude prompts us to repay the kindness we receive from other people and gratitude is also the source of compassion.

Nature, which makes up our environment, should foster our self-confidence. If we were born into scarcity caused by for example, droughts or unseasonal rain, we would not be able to earn enough for our self and our loved ones even though we might be very hard-working. Such an environment can erode away our self-confidence as well as our belief in cause and effect. Before we know it we may resort to believing in astrology or other products of man's imagination which can never help us escape from suffering.⁴⁶

To attain Buddhahood sometime in the distant future, each Bodhisatta must practice what is called "Buddhakarakadhamma". This is the stepwise practice which will lead a Bodhisatta to attain Buddhahood. Another name for this practice is "Parami" or Perfections.

5.4.3 The Meaning and Types of Parami or Perfections

1. The Meaning of Parami

The word "Parami" comes from the word "Parama" which means "ultimate". Parami means walking the path of increasing goodness. Parami is the concentrated form of merit. The merit we make each day, which comes from giving alms, keeping the Precepts, practicing meditation, etc., will accumulate daily and eventually turns into Parami. Luang Pu Wat Paknam had this to say about Parami, "Parami has the form of a sphere. The Merit Sphere has a diameter of 25 centimeters but when it is concentrated as Parami, the Parami Sphere has a diameter of just one inch."

⁴⁶ Phrabhavanaviriyakhun (Dattajeevo Bhikkhu). *Saddharungarunhangsantiphab*, B.E. 2551

Merit accumulation for the purpose of attaining Buddhahood or Arahathship must be performed earnestly. In other words, it must be done by laying one's life on the line. And it must be done over and over again until it becomes a strong personal trait which can follow the aspiring individual across lifetimes until he can attain Buddhahood or Arahathship. However, if one does not accumulate merit in earnest, then one's goal can never be realized. The reason is the current of defilements is so strong that one may get swept into the State of Loss and Woe instead.

When we can accumulate merit earnestly by putting our life on the line the merit earned will become high quality merit. This high quality merit will eventually be condensed as Parami or Perfections. Such high quality merit allows Parami or Perfections to reach the fullest extent faster. It is for the reason that one is willing to lay down one's life whenever one makes merit that the process is called the pursuit of Perfections.

Parami is also a process of self-training. We train our self by removing our bad habits, by practicing generosity, keeping the Precepts, and practicing meditation, by removing greed, anger, and ignorance. And we train our self in these ways by putting our life on the line.

In summary, Parami is a very condensed form of merit and it is gained by putting our life on the line whenever we accumulate merit.

2. The Types of Perfections

On one occasion, Phra Sariputra Thera asked the Lord Buddha, “Most Exalted One, what are the characteristic virtues of the Lord Buddha?”

The Lord Buddha answered, “Behold, Sariputra, there are ten virtues that characterize the Buddha. These include generosity, morality, renunciation, wisdom, endeavor, patience, truthfulness, resolution, loving-kindness, and equanimity. These virtues, which characterize the Buddha, are also called “Buddhakaradham”.⁴⁷

Generosity Perfection (Dana Parami): The word “Dana” comes from the Pali word “Danam” which means “a thing that should be given”. There are three types of Dana: Amisadana, Dhammadana, and Abhayadana.⁴⁸

Amisadana means the giving of alms or alms-giving. Alms include the four necessities: food, shelter, clothing, and medicine as well as any necessary items given to the venerable monks or the poor.

⁴⁷ *Paramatthadīpanī Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Cariyāpīṭaka*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 74, p. 572

⁴⁸ *Paramatthadīpanī Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Itivuttaka. Aṭṭhakathā-dāna Sutta*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 45, p. 616-617

Dhammadana means giving Dhamma knowledge. Dhamma knowledge includes knowledge about the Law of Kamma, merit and demerit, how to give alms, keep the Precepts, and practice meditation, etc.

Abhayadana means forgiving those who have wronged us. When we give Abhayadana, it means that we refuse to feel annoyed or irritated.

However, Dana Parami deals mostly with Amisadana. Dhammadana is the means to cultivate Wisdom Perfection since one must study a Dhamma topic in depth before one can teach it to others. And in studying the Dhamma, one is essentially cultivating wisdom. Abhayadana is considered to be Loving-kindness Perfection because without loving-kindness, we cannot forgive those who have wronged us.

Morality Perfection (Sila Parami): The word “Sila” comes from the Pali word “Silam”. Sila means not committing an offense through the body or through the word. This can be brought about by keeping the Five Precepts, the Eight Precepts, the Ten Precepts, and the 227 Precepts or Patimokkhasamvarasila.⁴⁹

The Five Precepts are for householders. They include no killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct, no lying, and no alcohol.

The Eight Precepts are for householders who wish to practice chastity and avoid anything that may obstruct chastity practice. The Eight Precepts, which are kept by Buddhists on Buddhist Holy Days, are called Upasatha Sila.

The Ten Precepts are kept by novice monks.

Patimokkhasamvarasila are the 227 Precepts kept by venerable monks.

Renunciation Perfection (Nekkhamma Parami): The word “Nekkhamma” comes from the Pali word “Nekkhammam” which means being removed from sense-desire by taking up the religious life as in “Nekkhammam Abhinikkhami. It means leaving the home in order to take up the religious life⁵⁰ as a novice monk by undertaking Pabbajja or as a monk by undertaking Upasampada. At any rate, one is required to undertake Pabbajja before one can undertake Upasampada.

⁴⁹ *Paramatthajotika Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Khuddakapāṭha*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 39, p. 311-312

⁵⁰ *Saddhammapakāsinī Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Paṭisambhidāmagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 68, p. 496

Paramatthadīpanī Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Cariyāpiṭaka. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 74, p. 278

Wisdom Perfection (Panna Parami): The word “Panna” is a Pali word and it means rendering the content or the meaning obvious.⁵¹ The general meaning of Panna includes breadth and depth of knowledge; intelligence which is derived from learning and thinking.⁵²

In Buddhism, there are three types of Panna:

1. Sutamayapanna Panna derived from listening
2. Cintamayapanna Panna derived from thinking
3. Bhavanamayapanna Panna derived from training⁵³

Training here means meditation practice as shown in the Commentary, “What virtue is practiced by Yogis, that virtue is called Bhavana or meditation practice.”⁵⁴

Endeavor Perfection (Viriya Parami): The word “Viriya” comes from the Pali word “Viriyam” and it means physical and mental endeavor.⁵⁵

It means endeavoring to pursue all ten Perfections. The pursuit of Perfections requires physical and mental endeavor in that the mind thinks about it and the body does it.

“Viriya” has many different meanings. “Viriyabalam” means courage or the deeds of a courageous person. Viriya means mobilization. Viriya means support. Viriya means endeavoring to practice according to convention. Viriyabala means not giving in to laziness.⁵⁶

In summary, “Viriya” is the courage to do good deeds or the courage to pursue Perfections. Viriya is needed to preserve one’s virtue. Viriya prevents one’s virtue from regressing. It is human nature to regress if we remain inactive or lazy. The current of defilements is constantly sweeping us downward and forcing us to commit misdeeds. Therefore, we must endeavor to pursue Perfections regularly so that we can stay the course.

Patience or Forbearance Perfection (Khanti Parami): The Pali word “Khanti” means “exercising patience by employing restraint. Khanti means the lack of cruelty. Khanti means not using abusive words. Khanti means a joyful mind.”⁵⁷

⁵¹ *Saddhammapakāsinī Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Paṭisambhidāmagga Aṭṭhakathā-Sutamayaññudades.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 68, p. 35

⁵² *The Royal Institute Dictionary Online*, B.E. 2525

⁵³ *Suttantapiṭaka Dīgha-nikāya Pāṭikavagga. Saṃgīti Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 16, no. 228, p. 173

⁵⁴ *Saddhammapakāsinī Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Paṭisambhidāmagga.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 68, p. 46

⁵⁵ *Manorothpuranī Aṭṭhakathā-aṅguttaranikāya Navakanipāta. Aṭṭhakathā-nissaya Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 37, p. 704

⁵⁶ *Saddhammapajjotikā Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Mahāniddes.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 65, p. 126

⁵⁷ *Manorothpuranī Aṭṭhakathā-aṅguttaranikāya Pañcakanipāta. Aṭṭhakathā-ājāniya Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 36, p. 450

The overall meaning of “Khanti” is the ability to maintain one’s normal state of mind in the face of favorable or unfavorable circumstances alike. It is a mind, which is as imperturbable as the ground in that the ground does not care if dirty, foul-smelling things or good-smelling things are dumped on it.

One point worth noting is the fact that in Buddhism “Khanti” or patience also means a joyful mind. It means that in the face of favorable or unfavorable circumstances alike, and no matter how violent the circumstances may be one continues to keep one’s mind joyous or bright. It is not the kind of patience which results in a repressed feeling, a frown, tightening of fists, gnashing of teeth. This kind of patience causes the mind to be joyless and unwholesome. However, the kind of patience, which is marked by joy, is the source of merit and Perfections.

Truthfulness Perfection (Sacca Parami): The word “Sacca” comes from the Pali word “Saccam” which means true, correct, right, accurate.⁵⁸ Sacca in some cases has the same meaning as Sila. For example, when one has Sacca, one does not tell lies, one speaks only truthful words; one never says anything that is incorrect even if it means having to incur negative consequences.

Sacca also means the intention to do something and the determination to get it done in spite of obstacles and difficulties. It means doing what one says one will do and saying what one has already done. It means keeping one’s promise or word.

Resolution Perfection (Adhisthana Parami): The word “Adhisthana” comes from the Pali word “Adhitthanam” which means a firm belief in good deeds. Adhisthana means the intention to perform wholesome deeds.⁵⁹

When we make a resolute wish, we must first recall the merit or Perfections which we have accumulated in the present and in the past. For example, after we give alms, keep the Precepts or practice meditation, we can make a resolute wish by recalling all of the merit accumulated in the past up until now to bless us quickly by granting us every wish fulfillment. And for those who aspire to Buddhahood, they can wish for Buddhahood each time that they accumulate merit.

A resolute wish can be made out loud or silently.

Abidhammapiṭaka Dhammasaṅghī. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 76, no. 860, p. 505

⁵⁸ *Paramatthajōtika Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Suttanipāta Aṭṭhakathā-mahāvagga.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 47, p. 593

Dhammapadaṭṭhakāthā Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Gāthā-Dhammapada. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 43, p. 492

Visuddhajhonvilāsini Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Apadāna Aṭṭhakathā-vījanīvagga. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 71, p. 235

⁵⁹ *Saddhammapajjotikā Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Mahāniddes Guhaṭṭhakasuttaniddes.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 65, p. 409

Saddhammapajjotikā Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Mahāniddes. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 66, p. 418

Loving-Kindness Perfection (Metta Parami): The Pali word “Metta” means love and care.⁶⁰ It means feeling love and goodwill for other living beings and wanting them to be happy.

The student may be familiar with the Four Noble Sentiments which include loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. Loving-kindness and equanimity in the Ten Perfections are the same as those in the Four Noble Sentiments. A person that practices the Four Noble Sentiments all throughout his life will be reborn in the Brahma Realm. Bodhisattas are often reborn in the Brahma Realm because they have practiced the Four Noble Sentiments all throughout their lives.

Loving-kindness can be practiced during two different periods: just before we end our meditation practice or any time during the day. To practice loving-kindness, we first recall the merit accumulated from our meditation practice or other deeds of merit and then we spread our love and goodwill to all living beings.

Equanimity Perfection (Upekkha Parami): Upekkha is a Pali word which means a neutral state of mind or impartiality.⁶¹

When the mind is neutral or impartial, it feels neither pleasure nor pain when faced with the vicissitudes of life or “The Eight Worldly Conditions” of gain, loss, fame, obscurity, praise, blame, happiness, and unhappiness. Equanimity causes the mind to remain imperturbable in the same way that the ground is not perturbed by anything be it clean or dirty. In other words, the ground feels neither pain nor pleasure.

Upekkha also means an impartial mind. An impartial mind is just and fair. That is, it is not influenced by love, hatred, fear or ignorance.

3. Levels of Parami

Parami has three different levels. The basic level is called Parami; the intermediate level is called Upaparami; and the ultimate level is called Paramatthaparami. Therefore, Parami has altogether thirty parts: Parami-10, Upaparami-10, and Paramatthaparami-10.

⁶⁰ *Saddhammapajjotikā Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Cūlaniddes*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 67, p. 670-671

⁶¹ *Manorothpuranī Aṭṭhakathā-aṅguttaranikāya Tikanipāta*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 34, p. 508
Saddhammapakāsinī Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Paṭisambhidāmagga. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 69, p. 476

1. Parami at the basic level is called Parami. At this level, one does not give away one's flesh and blood.
2. Parami at the intermediate level is called Upaparami. At this level, one gives away one's flesh, blood, and other body parts. Donation of eyes and blood is considered to be Dana-upaparami. To pursue Sila-upaparami, one is willing to sacrifice one's flesh, blood, and body parts in order to keep one's Precepts immaculate. Etc.
3. Parami at the ultimate level is called Paramatthaparami. At this level, one willingly gives up one's life in order to cultivate Dana-paramatthaparami. One is willing to give up one's life in order to keep one's Precepts immaculate. By so doing, one is cultivating Sila-paramatthaparami. Etc.

Upaparami and Paramatthaparami can also result from a concentrated form of merit as well as a concentrated form of Parami as taught by the Most Venerable Luang Pu Wat Paknam.

“Alms-giving results in a Merit Sphere. It should not matter whether the sphere is large or small to begin with but one should continue to give alms. In time, the Merit Sphere will be condensed into the Parami Sphere. The Merit Sphere has a diameter of 12 inches whereas the Parami Sphere has a diameter of just one inch. Once Parami has been pursued to the point where the Parami Sphere reaches a diameter of 12 inches, it will be condensed into the Upaparami Sphere having a diameter of one inch. And once the Upaparami Sphere reaches a diameter of 12 inches, it will be condensed into the Paramatthaparami Sphere having a diameter of one inch.”⁶²

The condensation of merit into Parami, Parami into Upaparami, and Upaparami into Paramatthaparami occurs automatically with increasing amounts of merit, Parami, Upaparami, and Paramatthaparami respectively.⁶³

Once the ten Parami Spheres, the ten Upaparami Spheres, and the ten Paramatthaparami Spheres reach a diameter of 12 inches, that is the time that one can attain Arahatsip and Nibbana. However, to be an Asiti Disiple, a Chief Disciple⁶⁴ or a Buddha, all thirty parts of Parami will need to be pursued at a much greater extent.”⁶⁵

⁶² Phramonkoltheppmuni (Sodh Candasaro). **The 69th Dhamma Lecture**, Part 52 on Rare Things, B.E.2538, p. 608-609

⁶³ Chaluay Sombatsook. “Abbots’ Handbook: Meditation Teaching Given by Phramonkoltheppmuni,” in **the Life History of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam and Abbots’ Handbook**, ed. Wat Pak Nam and Luang Phaw Wat Pak Nam’s Disciple Association, Bangkok: Thai Watana Panich Press Co. Ltd., B.E. 2529, p. 156

⁶⁴ **Asiti Disciples** include the eighty senior disciples, who possess more Parami than Arahats in general. Asiti Disciples include Phra Mahakassapa Thera, Phra Ananda Thera, Phra Anuruddha Thera, Phra Mahakaccayana Thera, etc. The two Chief Disciples are Phra Sariputra Thera and Phra Mahamoggallana Thera.

⁶⁵ Chaluay Sombatsook. “Abbots’ Handbook: Meditation Teaching Given by Phramonkoltheppmuni,” in **the Life History of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam and Abbots’ Handbook**, ed. Wat Pak Nam and Luang Phaw Wat Pak Nam’s Disciple Association, Bangkok Thai Watana Panich Press Co. Ltd., B.E. 2529, p. 156

5.4.4 Giving up Life and Body Parts for the Attainment of Buddhahood

Some students may wonder if Bodhisattas really give up their body parts and life in order to pursue Generosity Perfection, Precepts Perfection, etc. Some may believe these stories to be mere myths because all of us regard our life as being the most precious. It has been said that if someone places at the same time a piece of burning coal on top of our head and on our parents' heads, we would remove the burning coal from our own head before removing them from our parents' heads.

The student must have heard before about murders, which were committed for the sake of love in that a person had chosen to end his own life and the life of his beloved rather than to live with unrequited love. It can be said that this person willingly laid down his life for the sake of love.

There are people that die as a result of a car accident, alcohol, cigarettes, AIDs, etc. They die because of their own recklessness. They know that driving fast and recklessly can cause them to meet with a fatal car accident. They know that excessive drinking, excessive smoking, and using the service of prostitutes can lead them to terminal illnesses. Yet, they willingly put their lives on the line for the sake of momentary pleasures.

In the Crusade War which lasted almost 200 years, millions of people died as a result of a religious ideal. Even now, many people willingly strap bombs to their body in order to carry out a terrorist act for the sake of their religious ideal.

The tragic events on September 11, B.E. 2544 occurred as a result of a religious ideal. The bombing of the World Trade Center caused 2,973 deaths, which included the suicidal attackers. On June 5, B.E. 2551, the U.S. Court Marshall tried the five people that were involved in this tragedy. All five people were sentenced to death. Mohammed, third in command of the al-Qaeda group and the person that planned this attack had this to say, "I want to be executed because this is the will of Allah. My execution will make me forever a martyr."⁶⁶

It is taught in Buddhism that if one lays down one's life in order to perform wholesome deeds, the result will be a huge amount of merit. In fact the merit earned in such a manner is so concentrated that it is called "Parami" or Perfections. Every great Bodhisatta to date has pursued Perfections in this manner. They willingly give up their eye to a blind person so that one day they will be able to "see" the Dhamma and become self-enlightened as the Buddha. They willingly give up their body parts as well as their life. However, one big difference between Bodhisattas and martyrs is that Bodhisattas never hurt or harm any living being in the process of laying down their lives for the sake of Buddhahood.

⁶⁶ "The U.S. Gets Ready to Execute 9/11 Criminals," **Thai Rath Newspaper Online**. B.E. 2551

There is one incident that demonstrates quite well the mentality of a Bodhisatta. This incident concerns a 13-year old girl called Chen Jin. She lived in the city of U-See in the province of Jiang Su. She took more than 200 sleeping pills so that she could donate her liver to her ailing father. Her mother said in an interview that her husband was suffering from terminal cancer and the prognosis was that he would not live for more than three months. She had kept this a secret from her daughter because her daughter really adored her father. However, toward the end of the month prior to the suicide, her daughter saw the physician's note in her handbag and found out about her father's grave condition. On January 24, B.E. 2552, the mother went to visit her husband at the hospital. Upon her return, she found her daughter unconscious and there was a note beside her daughter. It said, "Mom, I'm so sorry that I can't be with you any longer. After I die, please give my liver to Dad."⁶⁷

This mentality of sacrificing her life to help her father is no different from that of a Bodhisatta except that a Bodhisatta wants to help himself as well as everyone to escape from the suffering of the round of rebirth.

It should not be surprising then that a Bodhisatta can also give up his wife and children for the cause of Buddhahood as in the case of our Lord Gautama Buddha in the existence as Phra Vessandara. Courageous men regularly leave their wife and children behind to go to war in order to protect their country. Likewise, a Bodhisatta gives up his wife and children in order to wage a war with defilements for the sake of Buddhahood. Once a Bodhisatta attains Self-Enlightenment, he can return to save his wife and children and leads them out of suffering. The Lord Buddha helps not only his family but also multitudes of beings to escape from the suffering of the round of rebirth.

5.4.5 Fundamentals of Perfections Pursuit

During the existence as a Yogi called Sumetha, our Lord Gautama Buddha was given the Buddha-Forecast for the first time by the Lord Dipankara Buddha. Sumetha was told that he would attain Buddhahood at the stated time in the future. After having received the Buddha-Forecast, the Yogi Sumetha proceeded to formulate the plan for his own pursuit of Perfections as follows:

Generosity Perfection or Dana Parami: If I wish to attain Buddhahood, I must give in the way that a water jar filled to the brim with water is turned up-side-down so that no water is left inside. Therefore, I must give to the poor until I have nothing left.

Precepts Perfection or Sila Parami: If I wish to attain Buddhahood, I must be like a yak in that when its tail gets caught in something it would rather die than damage the hair on its tail. Therefore, I must keep the Precepts immaculately in the same way that a yak cares for its tail hair.

⁶⁷ "A Girl Committed Suicide to Help Dad," **Kaosod Newspaper Online**. B.E. 2552

Renunciation Perfection or Nekkhamma Parami: If I wish to attain Buddhahood, I must be like the prisoner that has long been in prison and wants nothing more than to get out. Therefore, I must realize how the Three Spheres is a prison. I must look for the way out of the Three Spheres by taking up the religious life.

Wisdom Perfection or Panna Parami: If I wish to attain Buddhahood, I must be like the monk who begs for alms from every family regardless of their social status in order to sustain himself. It means that I must be willing to learn from knowledgeable people regardless of their social status so that I can cultivate Panna Parami to the fullest extent and attain Buddhahood.

Endeavor Perfection or Viriya Parami: If I wish to attain Buddhahood, I must be like the great Rajasiha that is constantly on guard whether sitting, standing, or walking. Therefore, I must practice endeavor throughout every future lifetime until I can cultivate Viriya Parami to the fullest extent and attain Buddhahood.

Patience Perfection or Khanti Parami: If I wish to attain Buddhahood, I must be like the ground which tolerates everything that is dumped on it. Therefore, I must be able to tolerate praises and blames until I can cultivate Khanti Parami to the fullest extent and attain Buddhahood.

Truthfulness Perfection or Sacca Parami: If I wish to attain Buddhahood, I must be like the morning star which never deviates from its orbit. Therefore, I must never deviate from truthfulness until I can cultivate Sacca Parami to the fullest extent and attain Buddhahood.

Resolution Perfection or Adhithan Parami: If I wish to attain Buddhahood, I must be like the mountain which can withstand gale-force winds. Therefore, I must remain true to my goal until I can cultivate Adhithan Parami to the fullest extent and attain Buddhahood.

Loving-kindness Perfection or Metta Parami: If I wish to attain Buddhahood, I must be like water that cools everyone alike and washes away dirt. Therefore, I must be loving and kind to friends and foes alike until I can cultivate Metta Parami to the fullest extent and attain Buddhahood.

Upekkha Parami or Equanimity Perfection: If I wish to attain Buddhahood, I must be like the ground which is indifferent to clean and dirty things that are dumped on it and it feels neither pleasure nor displeasure. Therefore, I must not be affected by happiness or unhappiness until I can cultivate Upekkha Parami to the fullest extent and attain Buddhahood.

The Yogi Sumetha came up with these ways of pursuing Perfections by recalling the previous lives of past Bodhisattas, who had already attained Self-Enlightenment and became the Buddha. He said, “I sat in a half-lotus position and thought to myself how I was an expert in the Jhanas and supernatural powers. In all of the 10,000 Lokadhatu⁶⁸, there were no Yogis that could be compared to me. I decided to do a search about “Buddhakaradhamma”. As I was doing my research, I could see that Dana Parami was the very first road which every past Bodhisatta had taken. I told myself that I had to pursue this first Perfection before all other Perfections. If I wished to attain Buddhahood, I had to give to the poor regardless of their social status in the same way that a water jar filled to the brim with water is turned up-side-down so that no water is left inside.”⁶⁹

The Yogi Sumetha practiced meditation and researched “Buddhakaradhamma” in this manner until all ten Perfections had been found. He had earnestly pursued Perfections for four Asankheyya-Kappas and an additional 100,000 Kappas and eventually became self-enlightened as the Lord Gautama Buddha. In fact, this is not the first lifetime that our Bodhisatta began pursuing Perfections. He had already pursued Perfections for sixteen Asankheyya Kappas prior to the existence as the Yogi Sumetha. The reason he had to research “Buddhakaradhamma” during meditation is that rebirth causes us to lose all memories of our previous lives.

5.4.6 The Steps Involved in a Bodhisatta’s Pursuit of Perfections

1. The Unit of Time Relevant to Perfections Pursuit

This unit of time is called “Kappa” as in 100,000 Kappas or Asankheyya-Kappas.

As previously mentioned, there are three types of Buddha: Pannadhika Buddha, Saddhadhika Buddha, and Viriyadhika Buddha. These types of Buddha differ in accordance with the length of time spent in their pursuit of Perfections.

Pannadhika Buddha spends a total of twenty Asankheyya-Kappas and an additional 100,000 Kappas in their pursuit of Perfections.

Saddhadhika Buddha spends a total of forty Asankheyya-Kappas and an additional 100,000 Kappas in their pursuit of Perfections.

Viriyadhika Buddha spends a total of eighty Asankheyya-Kappas and an additional 100,000 Kappas in their pursuit of Perfections.

⁶⁸ **Lokadhatu** means groups of galaxies. There are three kinds of Lokadhatu: Lokadhatu that consists of 1,000 galaxies, Lokadhatu that consists of one million galaxies, and Lokadhatu that consists of one 1,000,000 million galaxies.

⁶⁹ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Apadāna Part 2 Dīpaṇkornbuddhavong I.* Siamrath Press, vol. 33, no. 2, p. 304

It was written, “He cannot pursue Generosity Perfection for just one or two or three Asankheyya-Kappas in order to become a Buddha.”⁷⁰ In the Commentary, it was written about Phra Sariputra Thera’s pursuit of Perfections, “One Asankheyya-Kappa and 100,000 Kappas ago, the Most Venerable Phra Sariputra was born in a wealthy Brahmin family and his name was Sarada.”⁷¹

“Kappa” is a unit of time which is unimaginably long. The word “Asankheyya” means an incalculable number.

We all know the units of time such as day, week, month, and year.

However, Kappa is also a unit of time but it is too long and too difficult to determine. The Lord Buddha said, “Behold monks, a Kappa is a very long time. It is not easy to determine a Kappa in terms of 100 years, 1,000 years or 100,000 years... A Kappa is like a stone mountain which is 16 kilometers long, 16 kilometers wide and 16 kilometers high with no crevices and completely solid. Now, a man uses a cloth from the Kasi Kingdom and brushes the mountain once every 100 years. The length of time it takes for this solid mountain to be leveled to the ground as a result of this man’s action is still shorter than a Kappa. That’s how long a Kappa is.”⁷²

“Asankheyya” means incalculable or an incalculable number.⁷³

If we count the number from 1 to Asankheyya, it will proceed this way: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21.....Asankheyya.

It was written in the Tribhumilokavinicachayakatha that 1 Asankheyya = ten million to the power of 20 or 10,000,000²⁰. It can also be written as 1 followed by 140 zeros.⁷⁴

According to this source, the length of time that each type of Buddha spends in their pursuit of Perfections can be written as follows:

20 x 10,000,000²⁰ Kappas + 100,000 Kappas

40 x 10,000,000²⁰ Kappas + 100,000 Kappas

80 x 10,000,000²⁰ Kappas + 100,000 Kappas

Asankheyya is used with other units of time as well such as Asankheyya-Year which according to this source, 1 Asankheyya-Year = 10,000,000²⁰ years.

⁷⁰ *Manorothpuranī Aṭṭhakathā-aṅguttaranikāya Ekanipāta*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 32, p. 209

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 259

⁷² *Suttantapiṭaka Samyuttanikāya Nidānavagga. Pabbata Sutta*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 26, no. 429-430, p. 514

⁷³ *Madhurattavilāsini Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Buddhavong*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 73, p. 140

⁷⁴ Phradhammakittivong. *Kam Wat* [Dictionary for Buddhist Studies], B.E. 2548, p. 1285

2. The Pursuit of Perfections prior to Receiving the Buddha-Forecast

Our Lord Gautama Buddha is a Pannadhika Buddha. Pannadhika Buddha spends the shortest time pursuing Perfections, which is equal to twenty Asankheyya-Kappas and an additional 100,000 Kappas. This length of time can be divided into three parts.

The First Part: Aspiring to Buddhahood – This takes seven Asankheyya-Kappas.

The Second Part: Verbally expressing his aspiration to Buddhahood – This takes nine Asankheyya- Kappas.

The Third Part: Receiving the first Buddha-Forecast – This takes four Asankheyya-Kappas.

Therefore, our Lord Gautama Buddha had pursued Perfections for a total of sixteen Asankheyya-Kappas prior to receiving the first Buddha Forecast. Here we will present only two of His countless lifetimes: The first lifetime in which He aspired to Buddhahood and the first lifetime in which He verbally expressed his aspiration to Buddhahood.

2.1) The First Lifetime in Which Our Lord Gautama Buddha Aspired to Buddhahood⁷⁵

It was written in the Jinakalamali Scripture and summarized here that in one previous lifetime, our Lord Gautama Buddha was born a poor man living in the city of Gandhara. He supported himself and his mother by selling vegetables and firewood. One day, he was carrying a heavy load of firewood from the woods under the hot sun. Feeling parched, he sat down under a Banyan tree for a little rest. He thought, “Now I still have the strength for this kind of work but when I get older or sick, will I still be able to continue with the work then? I’d better travel to the city of Suvarnabhumi and bring back enough gold to support my mother and me for the rest of our lives.” Therefore, he and his mother boarded a junk where he worked as a deckhand in order to travel to Suvarnabhumi along with the merchants.

However, seven days after the junk set sail, it was wrecked and all the merchants perished in the rough water. Our Bodhisatta carried his mother on his back as he swam in the ocean. At the time, the king of the five Brahma realms of Suddhavasa was surveying all the living beings from the Brahma Realm and thought, “An Asankheyya-Kappa has already gone past; might there not be a man now who can eventually become self-enlightened as the Buddha? The Brahma king saw our Bodhisatta doing his best to save his mother in the middle of the vast ocean. He knew right away that our Bodhisatta was both diligent and persistent and he had the habit of helping others.

⁷⁵ Phraratanapannāthera. **Jinakalamalipakorn**, tr. by Prof. POL. LT. COL. Sang Monvithune, B.E. 2540, p. 156-157

On the part of our Bodhisatta, while he was swimming in the ocean carrying his mother on his back he had the sudden wish to pursue Perfections in order to become self-enlightened as the Buddha. He thought, “Buddho bodheyyam mutto mojeyyam tinno tareyyanti”⁷⁶ It means once I attain Enlightenment, I will help others to do the same. Once I’ve been emancipated, I will help others to be emancipated too. Once I can reach the shore of Nibbana, I will help others to reach the shore of Nibbana as well.

Having aspired to Buddhahood, our Bodhisatta swam in the ocean carrying his mother on his back for a few more days before they landed safely on the shore. Having saved his mother’s life, he took care of her for the rest of her life. After he died, he was reborn in the Celestial Realm. This is the existence called “Pathamacittupadakala” because it was the first time that our Bodhisatta aspired to Buddhahood. For this reason, he was given the name “Bodhisatta”. Our Bodhisatta continued to pursue Perfections for countless lifetimes afterward until seven Asankheyya-Kappas had gone past.

Phrabhavanaviriyakhun (Luang Por Dattajeevo) analyzed the content of the Jinakalamali Scripture as follows. There were four reasons that allowed our Bodhisatta to aspire to Buddhahood in that lifetime: He realized the pain and suffering that he was facing at the time; he had right understanding in terms of the truth about life and the world; he did not shrink from obstacles; and he wanted to repay his mother to whom he owed a great debt of gratitude.

While he was swimming in the ocean carrying his mother on his back, he had had to witness many people, who had been kind to him, perish right before his eyes. The tragic incident motivated him to fight against the suffering of the round of rebirth, to look for a way out of the round of rebirth, and to help those who had been kind to him escape from the round of rebirth as well.

Eventually he did discover that there was a way which would enable him to help everyone that perished in the ocean to escape from suffering. And that was to attain Self-Enlightenment and become the Buddha. Therefore, he made the resolute wish to pursue Perfections until he could become the Buddha sometime in the distant future. This process is called aspiring to Buddhahood.

Our Lord Gautama Buddha’s pursuit of Perfections as a Bodhisatta began from that moment onward. It began while he was swimming against the waves and gale-force winds with his mother on his back.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Phrabhavanaviriyakhun (Venerable Dattajeevo Bhikkhu). **Saddharungarunhangsantiphab**, B.E. 2551

2.2) The First Lifetime in Which Our Bodhisatta Verbally Expressed His Aspiration to Buddhahood.⁷⁸

This is the lifetime in which our Lord Buddha while being a Bodhisatta ceased to be in the Celestial Realm and had a rebirth in the Human Realm. He was born in a very wealthy Brahmin family and his name was “Brahmakumara”. He had completed his study in the three Vedas which are the sacred scriptures of Brahmanism. He later became a teacher of the three Vedas and had altogether 500 pupils. After his parents passed away, he gave away all of his material possessions to his 500 pupils and took up the religious life as a Yogi. He had gone to practice asceticism near the Pandara Mountain. Later, all 500 pupils decided to take up the religious life and came to practice asceticism under our Bodhisatta.

One day our Bodhisatta and one of his pupils went up the mountain to look for fruits. Our Bodhisatta happened to look down into the valley and saw a tigress with a tiny cub. The tigress was emaciated and she was looking at her cub with the intention of eating it. At that moment, our Bodhisatta felt keenly the sheer desperation of life on earth.

Our Bodhisatta told his pupil to quickly go and look for a piece of meat. While he was waiting for his pupil to return, it suddenly occurred to him that this body of mine is devoid of substance. It is still contaminated by demerit and unwholesomeness, which has been fermenting in my mind for so long and this body is the cause of suffering.” He realized that Perfections were the only things that could lead him and other fellow beings out of suffering.

At this point, our Bodhisatta decided to give up his life as alms for the tigress. He made the resolute wish, “By the power of my alms-giving, may I attain in the future the Dhamma which will lead me out of suffering. May I also be able to help other living beings out of the round of rebirth. I ask that all the celestial beings come to this place to witness my resolve to attain Buddhahood sometime in the distant future.” Our Bodhisatta threw himself down into the valley and was subsequently eaten by the tigress. He had given up his life in order to save the life of the tiger cub. As a result of this wholesome deed, he was reborn in the Celestial Realm.

Bodhisattas are resolute and bold by nature. They care not for their body or their life. They willingly give up their life for the sake of Buddhahood and they do it over and over again for countless lifetimes.

This second period lasted nine Asankheyya-Kappas.

⁷⁸ Phrathepmuni (Vilas Yanavaro). *Sartvaduaykanphenphrabuddhachao* [Buddhahood], p. 108-112

3. The First Lifetime in Which Our Bodhisatta Received the First Buddha-Forecast

Having pursued Perfections for countless lifetimes during the unimaginably long period of sixteen Asankheyya-Kappas, in the seventeenth Asankheyya-Kappa our Bodhisatta was reborn on earth during the Kappa which is called “Saramandakappa”. It is called “Saramandakappa” because the Kappa saw altogether the happening of four different Buddhas. And their names were the Lord Tanhamkara Buddha, the Lord Medhamkara Buddha, the Lord Saranamkara Buddha, and the Lord Dipankara Buddha.

Our Bodhisatta had met all four Buddhas but received the Buddha-Forecast for the first time from the Lord Dipankara Buddha. He was told that he would become self-enlightened as the Buddha four Asankheyya-Kappas and an additional 100,000 Kappas hence.

Four Asankheyya-Kappas and 100,000 Kappas ago in the city of abundance called Amaravadi, our Bodhisatta was born a Brahmin called Sumedha. He was a handsome man and learnt in the three Vedas. He was also learnt in all the arts. His parents passed away when he was still a young man. The person, who looked after the family’s treasury, showed Sumedha the records of all of the family’s material possessions.

Upon seeing the records, Sumedha thought how his parents and grandparents had accumulated enormous wealth and yet they could take nothing with them to the hereafter. Therefore, he decided to turn his material wealth into the kind of wealth which could follow him to future lifetimes. He also considered the fact that birth, sickness, and death brought about pain and suffering and he wished to seek the immortal Dhamma which could free him from ever experiencing birth, aging, sickness, and death again and lead him to everlasting happiness. He thought about the existence of opposing phenomena such as happiness and unhappiness. Likewise, if there exist the round of rebirth, there has to also exist the way out of the round of rebirth. If there is heat, there has to exist coolness to quench the heat. There has to exist tranquility to extinguish the heat of greed, anger, and ignorance. There is bad and there is good. Likewise, there is rebirth and there has to exist the end of rebirth.

Sumedha decided that he wanted to take up the religious life in order to search for the way out of suffering. Therefore, he gave away all of his material possessions to the people of the city before he became a Yogi and went to live in the Himavanta Forest. After just seven days of meditation practice, he could achieve Samapatti-8 or the eight meditative attainments and Abhinna-5 or the Five Kinds of Higher Knowledge. The Yogi Sumedha had been enjoying the bliss of meditative absorptions in the forest and was therefore completely unaware that the Lord Dipankara Buddha had happened on earth.

One day, the Lord Dipankara Buddha and His Perfected Disciples numbering 400,000 were on their way to the city of Ramma. When the city residents heard about the news, they went to work clearing and smoothing the path for the Lord Buddha and His Perfected Disciples. At the time, the Yogi Sumedha was traveling in the air over Ramma City. He saw the masses decorating the city from the air and descended to the ground to find out what was going on. As soon as he heard the word “Buddho”, he was overwhelmed with joy and went to help the people with clearing the path.

The Lord Dipankara Buddha arrived before the path was completed. Sumedha decided to use his body as a bridge over the remaining rough part so that the Lord Buddha and all 400,000 Arahats could walk across. While he was lying down on the ground, he thought that if he wished to become the Lord Dipankara Buddha’s disciple, he would be able to extinguish all of his defilements on that very day. But then he would not be able to benefit the masses. Based on the fact that he was willing to give up his life by acting as a bridge for the Lord Buddha and the Arahats, Sumedha made a resolute wish that the enormous amount of merit earned would help him to attain Buddhahood so that he could help living beings to cross over to Nibbana with him.

The Lord Dipankara Buddha and His Perfected Disciples arrived at the spot where Sumedha was lying down. The Lord Dipankara Buddha stepped on the Yogi’s body with His right foot followed by all the Arahats. Having walked across, the Lord Dipankara Buddha turned around to look at Sumedha and gave him the Buddha-Forecast. “This Yogi has aspired to Buddhahood. And four Asankheyya-Kappas and an additional 100,000 Kappas from now, this Yogi will become the Buddha. His name will be Gautama. The city in which he will live is called Kapilavastu. His mother’s name will be Queen Sirimahamaya. His father’s name will be King Suddhodana. He will attain Self-Enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree. His Chief Disciple to the right will be called Phra Sariputra. His Chief Disciple to the left will be called Phra Moggallana. His personal assistant will be called Phra Ananda. The First Female Chief Disciple will be called Phra Khema Theri. And the Second Female Chief Disciple will be called Phra Upalavanna Theri.

At the end of the Buddha-Forecast, all 400,000 Arahats rejoiced and circumambulated Sumedha’s person before following the Lord Dipankara Buddha into the city. Having heard the Buddha-Forecast, Sumedha was overjoyed and felt as if he would become the Buddha the next day. He subsequently went into meditation to do a search on “Buddhakaradhamma” or the Ten Perfections. He pledged to observe “Buddhakaradhamma” and he spent the rest of his days in the forest. After he passed away, he was reborn in the Brahma Realm.

It was in this existence that our Bodhisatta received the title of “Niyatabodhisatta”. It means that he would definitely become the Buddha at the stated time in the future. From there, our Bodhisatta spent four additional Asankheyya-Kappas and an additional 100,000 Kappas pursuing Perfections in order to become the Lord Buddha, the world’s Great Teacher.

4. Our Bodhisatta's Pursuit of Perfections after Having Received the Buddha-Forecast

A table is given below to show our Bodhisatta's pursuit of Perfections under twenty-four different Buddhas who had given him the Buddha-Forecast. The table ends with our Bodhisatta's final existence as the Lord Gautama Buddha.

No.	The Name of the Lord Buddha	Our Bodhisatta's Pursuit of Perfections
1.	The Lord Dipankara Buddha	As a Brahmin called Sumedha, finished the Three Vedas, gave away trillions, became a Yogi and lived in the Himavanta Forest, attained Abhinna-5, lay his body down as a bridge for the Lord Dipankara Buddha and His Perfected Disciples, received the first Buddha-Forecast that he would attain Buddhahood in four Asankheyya Kappas and an additional 100,000 Kappas.
2.	The Lord Kondanna Buddha	As a great king called Vijitavi, abdicated to ordain as a monk under the Lord Buddha, studied the Suttas and the Vinaya, attained Abhinna, reborn in the Brahma Realm.
3.	The Lord Monkala Buddha	As a Brahmin called Suruci, finished the Three Vedas, offered his house to the Lord Buddha and ordained as monk, studied the Suttas and the Vinaya, practiced the Four Paths of Accomplishment, attained Abhinna, reborn in the Brahma Realm.
4.	The Lord Sumana Buddha	As a Phya Naga called Atula, offered food and beverages to the Lord Buddha and 1,000,000 million monks, take the Lord Buddha and the monks as his refuge.
5.	The Lord Revata Buddha	As a Brahmin called Atideba, took the Lord Buddha as his refuge, praised the Buddha-Virtues, and offered robes to the Lord Buddha.
6.	The Lord Sobhita Buddha	As a Brahmin called Sujati, offered food and beverages to the Lord Buddha and His disciples.
7.	The Lord Anomadassi Buddha	As a Yakkha possessing great supernatural powers, ruled over tens of millions of Yakkhas, offered food and beverages to the Lord Buddha and His disciples. In this existence, the Yogi Suruci and the Phya Naga Varuna received the first Buddha-Forecast that they would be the Chief Disciples of the Lord Gautama Buddha and their names would be Phra Sariputra Thera and Phra Mahamoggalana respectively.
8.	The Lord Paduma Buddha	As a Rajasiha, saw the Lord Buddha practicing meditation alone in the forest, paid homage to the Lord Buddha and circumambulated Him, roared mightily three times and stood guard over the Lord Buddha for seven consecutive days.
9.	The Lord Narada Buddha	As a fire-worshipping ascetic, attained Abhinna-5, offered food and beverages to the Lord Buddha and the monks as well as the laity, worshipped the Lord Buddha with sandalwood.

No.	The Name of the Lord Buddha	Our Bodhisatta's Pursuit of Perfections
10.	The Lord Padumutara Buddha	As a fire-worshipping ascetic called Ratthika, gave cloths and food to the Lord Buddha and the monks. This is the existence that outstanding Arahats, Upasakas, and Upasikas in the time of the Lord Gautama Buddha received their first Buddha-Forecast. These included Phra Ananda, the wealthy man Anathapindika, etc.
11.	The Lord Sumedha Buddha	As a man called Utara, donated 800 million to the Lord Buddha and the monks, ordained as a monk under the Lord Buddha, studied the Suttas and the Vinaya, attained Abhinna and was reborn in the Brahma Realm.
12.	The Lord Sujata Buddha	As a Universal Monarch, donated all of his material wealth to the Lord Buddha, ordained as a monk under the Lord Buddha, studied the Suttas and the Vinaya, practiced the Four Noble Sentiments, attained Abhinna, and was reborn in the Brahma Realm.
13.	The Lord Piyadassi Buddha	As a man called Kassapa, completed the three Vedas, heard the Lord Buddha's Dhamma lecture, donated 1,000,000 million to build a temple, pledged the Five Precepts, and took the Triple Gem as his refuge.
14.	The Lord Atthadassi Buddha	As a fire-worshipping ascetic called Susima, worshipped the Lord Buddha with celestial flowers.
15.	The Lord Dhammadassi Buddha	As the celestial king of the Tavatimsa Realm called Purindasakka, worshipped the Lord Buddha with celestial flowers, scented celestial articles, and celestial music.
16.	The Lord Siddhattha Buddha	As a Yogi called Mankala, attained Abhinna, worshipped the Lord Buddha with plums.
17.	The Lord Tissa Buddha	As a king called Sujati, abdicated the throne to take up the religious life as a Yogi, made an umbrella for the Lord Buddha using celestial flowers.
18.	The Lord Pussa Buddha	As a king called Vijita, abdicated the throne to ordain as a monk under the Lord Buddha, studied the Suttas and the Vinaya, practiced the Four Noble Sentiments, attained Abhinna, and was reborn in the Brahma Realm.
19.	The Lord Vipassi Buddha	As a Phya Naga king called Atula, worshipped the Lord Buddha with celestial music and an ornate bench made of gold and precious gems.
20.	The Lord Sikhi Buddha	As a king called Arindama, offered food and beverages to the Lord Buddha and the monks, offered tens of millions of fine quality cloths, offered elephants decked with ornaments as a means of transportation to the Lord Buddha and the monks.
21.	The Lord Vessabhu Buddha	As a king called Sudasana, worshipped the Lord Buddha and the monks with rice and cloths, offered great quantities of alms every day and every night, ordained as a monk under the Lord Buddha, practiced according to the Lord Buddha's Teachings.
22.	The Lord Kakusandha Buddha	As a king called Khema, offered all kinds of alms including alms-bowls, robes, eye-drops, etc., to the Lord Buddha and the monks.

No.	The Name of the Lord Buddha	Our Bodhisatta's Pursuit of Perfections
23.	The Lord Konagamana Buddha	As a king called Banbata, offered cloths made of silk and wool, and gold shoes to the Lord Buddha and the monks, abdicated the throne to ordain as a monk under the Lord Buddha.
24.	The Lord Kassapa Buddha	As a man called Jotipala, completed the three Vedas, completed the art of surveying land and weather, heard the Dhamma lecture from the Lord Buddha and ordained as a monk under the Lord Buddha, studied the Lord Buddha's Sayings, worked hard to follow the Lord Buddha's Teachings.
25.	The Lord Gautama Buddha	After the Lord Kassapa Buddha, our Bodhisatta did not meet another Buddha. In his next to the final existence, he was born Phra Vessandara and in this existence, his Perfections reached the fullest extent. After he died, he was reborn as the king of the Tusita Realm called Santatusita. When the time was right, celestial beings came to entreat him to be reborn in the Human Realm in order to become self-enlightened as the Lord Gautama Buddha.

Having met altogether twenty-four different Buddhas, our Bodhisatta ordained as a monk under eight Buddhas. He took up the religious life as a Yogi or a fire-worshipping ascetic in six different lifetimes. He was a Phya Naga in two lifetimes, a Rajasiha in one lifetime, as King Sakka in one lifetime, as a Yakkha in one lifetime, and as a lay supporter of Buddhism in five different lifetimes. In each of these lifetimes he had pursued all Ten Perfections to the best of his ability.

1. Generosity Perfection or Dana Parami: He either abdicated the throne to ordain as a monk or offered a huge number of alms to the Lord Buddha and the monks as a lay supporter.
2. Morality Perfection or Sila Parami: He kept the Precepts of a monk or a Yogi during the existences that he took up the religious life or kept the Five Precepts during the existences that he was a householder.
3. Renunciation Perfection or Nekkhamma Parami: He ordained as a Buddhist monk or became a Yogi, an ascetic or a fire-worshipping ascetic.
4. Wisdom Perfection or Panna Parami: He studied the Lord Buddha's Sayings, which include the Suttas and the Vinaya. He practiced meditation, which is the source of Bhavanamaya Panna until he could attain Abhinna. He was also learnt in other arts.

The rest of the Perfections which include Endeavor Perfection or Viriya Parami, Patience Perfection or Khanti Parami, Resolution Perfection or Adhithan Parami, Loving-kindness Perfection or Metta Parami, and Equanimity Perfection or Upekkha Parami, these were pursued along with the first four Perfections. This is because these latter six Perfections are needed in order to pursue the first four Perfections. The Lord Gautama Buddha said, “The Lord Kakusantha Buddha gave me the Buddha-Forecast and said that I would be one of the Buddhas in this Bhaddara Kappa. Having heard the Buddha-Forecast, I resolved to pursue all Ten Perfections to the fullest extent.”⁷⁹ In many existences, our Bodhisatta attained Abhinna and was reborn in the Brahma Realm. Practicing the Four Noble Sentiments or Brahmavihara-4 which include loving-kindness, compassion, altruistic joy, and equanimity is in itself the pursuit of Metta Parami and Upekkha Parami.

5. Mistakes Made along the Path of Perfections Pursuit

While our Bodhisatta was pursuing Perfections, he had made quite a few mistakes as a result of his inherent defilements. Even after having received the Buddha-Forecast, a Bodhisatta can still make mistakes. From Abhabbathana⁸⁰ -18 or the eighteen unfortunate states into which a Niyatabodhisatta will not fall, there are five states that are of interest. If a Bodhisatta transgresses the Precepts and has to be reborn in the Animal Realm, he will not be smaller than a weaverbird or larger than an elephant. If he is reborn in the Peta Realm, he will not be a Khupapipasika Peta or a Nijjhamatanhika Peta. If he is reborn in the Asurakaya Realm, he will not be a Kalakanjikasura.⁸¹ And if the mistake causes him to be reborn in the Hell Realm, he will not be born in the hell realm of Aveci or Lokanta.⁸²

In the more than 500 Jataka stories which are stories about our Bodhisatta’s pursuit of Perfections, there were many existences in which our Bodhisatta was reborn in the Animal Realm. Our Lord Buddha also told us about the ill consequences of the unwholesome deeds committed in His previous existences which still showed up in His final existence. These are called “Buddhapadana-13”⁸³ Here only six will be mentioned.

1. In one previous existence, our Bodhisatta was a ruffian called Punali, he had made a false accusation against a Paccekabuddha called Surabhi. As a result of this grave misdeed, he spent a long time in the Hell Realm. And in His final existence as a Buddha, He was falsely accused by the woman Sundarika that He had sexual intercourse with her.

⁷⁹ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Apadāna Part II*. Siamrath Press, vol. 33, no. 23, p. 357-358

⁸⁰ It means an unfortunate state.

⁸¹ A *Nijjhamatanhika Peta* is a Peta that is burnt by desire. A *Khupapipasika Peta* is a Peta that is hungry and thirsty. A *Kalakanjikasura* is an Asurakaya that suffers from tremendous thirst for up to two or three Buddha Eons.

⁸² *Visuddhahajhonvilāsini Atthakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Apadāna*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 70, p. 95-96, 269-270

⁸³ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Apadāna*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 71, no. 392, p. 873-877

2. In one previous existence, our Bodhisatta verbally abused an Arahant called Phussa by saying, “You should chew on red rice and not wheat.” As a result of this misdeed, in His final existence as a Buddha, He had to eat red rice for a total of three months during the time that He was staying in the town of Veranja.
3. In one previous existence, our Bodhisatta had killed his half-brother for the sake of an inheritance. He threw his half-brother into a gorge and smashed him with a large stone. As a result of this misdeed, Phra Devadatt rolled a large stone down the mountain and one small piece of that stone hit the Lord Buddha’s toe causing it to bruise.
4. In one previous existence, our Bodhisatta was a mahout, and he drove his elephant toward a Paccekabuddha and tied him up while he was on his alms-round. As a result of this misdeed, in His final existence as a Buddha, the ferocious elephant Nalagiri was driven toward Him in an attempt to harm Him.
5. In one previous existence, our Bodhisatta was a foot soldier and had killed a large number of people. As a result of this misdeed, he had been burnt in the Hell Realm for a very long time and in His final existence as a Buddha, He burnt the skin on His foot.
6. In the last Buddha-Eon, our Bodhisatta was born in a Brahmin family and his name was Jotipala. He insulted the Lord Kassapa Buddha by saying, “No Self-Enlightenment has occurred because it is extremely difficult to attain Buddhahood.” As a result of this misdeed, in His final existence as the Buddha, He had to practice self-mortification for a total of six years before he decided to practice the Middle Way and eventually attained Buddhahood.

Lessons Learnt from Our Bodhisatta’s Mistakes:

1. A Niyatobodhisatta is a Bodhisatta who has accumulated a vast amount of merit and will definitely become self-enlightened as the Buddha at the stated time in the future. Moreover, he has already pursued Perfections to the point where he could attain Arahantship at the time when he received the first Buddha-Forecast. And yet these noble qualities do not prevent a Niyatobodhisatta from committing misdeeds in some existences and they end up being reborn in the Animal Realm, in the Peta Realm, in the Asurakaya Realm or in the Hell Realm.

Such mistakes point to the fact that a Bodhisatta is still an ordinary individual who can make mistakes in the same way that we do because he still possesses defilements. However, one big difference between a Bodhisatta and an ordinary human being is the fact that a Bodhisatta has the greatest wish to not only attain Buddhahood but to also teach others to escape from the suffering of the round of rebirth. Therefore, it behooves all of us to be especially careful. We cannot afford to be reckless because we are far from being a Niyatobodhisatta. We must realize that life in the round of rebirth is like being on a sword’s edge, the minute we are careless we will get hurt.

2. A Niyatabodhisatta's mistakes are caused by defilements. Defilements force us to commit misdeeds; so do our environment and our own recklessness. What we mean by the environment here are the people around us. For example, during the existence that our Bodhisatta was Jotipala, he was born in a Brahmin family, which subscribed to Brahmanism and despised Buddhism and Buddhist monks. As a result of his environment, it caused him to think, say, and do things according to what he had been taught.⁸⁴

There are things we can do to make sure that we live in a good environment in our future existences. We can be a virtuous friend (Kalayanamitra) and we can encourage as many people as we can to perform wholesome deeds. In addition, each time we make merit we should always remember to make a resolute wish, "May I be reborn in a Right View family. May I have faith in Buddhism. May I meet a virtuous friend who helps guide me toward the path of light. May I never commit misdeeds especially against such exceptional virtuous personages as the Lord Buddha, a Paccekabuddha, an Arahāt. Etc.

3. Despite the fact that our Bodhisatta had unwittingly committed many misdeeds, in the end he was able to attain Buddhahood. This attests to the fact that he had had to be extremely determined to realize his lofty goal. After the time spent in one of the States of Unhappiness, as soon as he was reborn in the Human Realm, he would continue to staunchly pursue Perfections. In fact, even as an animal, he still strived to pursue Perfections to the best of his ability.

A Bodhisatta does not waste his time lamenting his past mistakes but he chooses to learn from them in such a way as to prevent those mistakes from ever happening again. And the result is after countless lifetimes, a Bodhisatta ends up making fewer and fewer mistakes. Therefore, however many times we fall down we must get up again and consider why we fell down in the first place so that we can take measures to prevent our self from falling down again as we work our way toward our ultimate goal.

Anyone that spends his life and time being stuck in his past mistakes will not be able to meet with success. Just think, during the time of our Lord Gautama Buddha, no one could surpass Phra Devadat in terms of grave misdeeds. He had made several attempts to murder our Lord Buddha. And yet in the end, he repented. Although he is now spending time in the hell realm of Aveci Mahanarok but in the distant future when his past and new merit come together to shed its blessings on him, he will attain Self-Enlightenment as a Paccekabuddha called Atthisasara.⁸⁵ Likewise, King Ajatasattu committed patricide and is now spending time in the hell realm of Lohakumbhinarok. But the fact that he had repented and after his repentance he had accumulated a vast amount of merit all throughout his life, in the distant future he will attain Self-Enlightenment as a Paccekabuddha called Jivitavisesa.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Pui Sangchay. *Milinthapanha*, B.E. 2511, p. 306

⁸⁵ *Dhammapadaṭṭhakāthā Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Gāthā-Dhammapada*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 40, p. 199

⁸⁶ *Sumamgalavilāsini Aṭṭhakathā-dīgha-nikāya Sīlakhandhavagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 111, p. 496

The student will learn more about our Lord Buddha's interesting history in the courses Buddhahood GL204E and the Jatakas: The Pursuit of Perfections SB 405. The latter deals with the Lord Buddha's previous existences and the way He pursued Perfections as a Bodhisatta.

Assignments:

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

Chapter 6

The Dhamma:

The Lord Buddha's Teachings

Chapter 6

The Dhamma: The Lord Buddha's Teachings

The Dhamma: The Lord Buddha's Teachings

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6.7.5 The Law of Kamma vs. Scientific Principles

6.8 The Dhamma Is the Roadmap for Life in the Round of Rebirth

Concepts

1. The Lord Buddha's Teachings or the Dhamma comes from the Internal Triple Gem which resides inside the Lord Buddha's physical body. The Dhamma is the roadmap of life for every human being.
2. The Dhamma possesses six virtues. The Dhamma is the Lord Buddha's Teachings. One has to attain the Dhamma in order to see it. The Dhamma is timeless. The Dhamma is true and good and it can be proven to be true and good. The Dhamma should be embraced. The Dhamma is a personal experience.
3. The Four Noble Truths represent all of the Dhamma Principles. The Four Noble Truths include Suffering, the Cause of Suffering or craving, the Cessation of Suffering or Nirodha, and the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering or the Noble Eightfold Path.

The rest of the Dhamma Principles is an extension of the Four Noble Truths. And there are certain Dhamma topics which aid in the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path. Therefore, all of the Dhamma Principles are related to the Four Noble Truths.

There are two levels to the Four Noble Truths: the basic level and the elevated level. The basic level involves the study of the Four Noble Truths and the realization of the fact that human life is full of suffering, etc.

The elevated level involves the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path. It means practicing meditation regularly and earnestly until one can attain the Internal Triple Gem and through the Dhammakaya-Eye one can then see the Four Noble Truths.

4. Every intentional act through the body, the word, and the mind is called Kamma. If we perform good Kamma, we will receive good results. If we perform bad Kamma, we will receive bad results. It is the fact that each one of us possesses a unique mixture of good and bad Kamma that our lives are made uniquely different. The same can be said for animals. However, the fruits of Kamma are one of the unthinkables and can only be penetrated by meditation practice.

Objectives

1. To enable the student to gain an understanding about the Lord Buddha's Teachings.
2. To enable the student to apply the Lord Buddha's Teachings in his daily life and in his pursuit of Perfections.

Chapter 6

The Dhamma: The Lord Buddha's Teachings

6.1 What Is the Dhamma?

In Chapter 4, the student has already learnt that within the context of the Internal Triple Gem, the Dhamma means Dhammaratana. And Dhammaratana is the Dhamma Sphere which gives rise to each respective Dhammakaya Body that dwells at the center or the seventh base of each human being's body. However, within the context of the External Triple Gem, the Dhamma means the Lord Buddha's Teachings, which in turn come from the Internal Triple Gem.

The Dhamma as presented here in this chapter has to do with the Lord Buddha's Teachings. These include the Four Noble Truths, which deal with the reality of life, and how to live life correctly. These teachings will be presented in 6.3 but the Dhamma presented here is in fact the same as the Four Noble Truths but the Lord Buddha calls it Dhamma-Vinaya or Dhamma-Discipline.

Therefore, the word "Dhamma" here does not mean all of the Lord Buddha's Sayings but it means all of the teachings except for the Vinaya. However, when we talk about the Dhamma as part of the External Triple Gem, it means all of the Lord Buddha's Sayings.

Vinaya means a Bhikku's or a Bhikkuni's Precepts. It also includes a novice monk's Ten Precepts and a householder's Five or Eight Precepts.

It can also be emphasized further that the Dhamma means teachings whereas Vinaya means disciplinary rules. Therefore, the term "Dhamma-Vinaya" means the Lord Buddha's Teachings and the Disciplinary Rules.

Initially the Lord Buddha only gave Dhamma lectures such as Ovadapatimokkha, etc., and no disciplinary rules or Vinaya were decreed just yet. However, when more and more people from different walks of life possessing different temperaments and objectives came to join the monkhood, certain monks' conduct caused the laity to find faults with the monastic order. As each of these incidents arose, the Lord Buddha would decree a new disciplinary rule in order to forbid these monks to misbehave in the same way again.

During the Lord Buddha's time, His Teachings consisted of only two parts: Dhamma and Vinaya. Just before our Lord Buddha attained Complete Nibbana, He said, "The Dhamma and the Vinaya, which I have taught or decreed for your sake, shall be your Master after I am gone."¹

Since there are only two parts to the Lord Buddha's Teachings, where then did the third part come from?

After the Lord Buddha's attainment of Complete Nibbana, Buddhists continued to use the Dhamma-Vinaya to guide their lives. Initially, the Lord Buddha's Teachings were not written down and in time they ran the risk of disappearing altogether. Therefore, the first Sangiti or the first Council had to be held.

The term "Sangiti" means to rehearse, to chant together, to compose. It means a general convocation of the Sangha in order to settle questions of doctrine and to fix the text of the Scriptures.²

There have been several Sangitis to date but only the first three Sangitis held in India are accepted by every Buddhist school and every country.

The first Sangiti was held near the city of Rajagharh three months after the Lord Buddha's attainment of Complete Nibbana. Five hundred Arahats participated in it. Phra Mahakassapa Thera chaired the convocation and he raised certain relevant questions. Phra Upali answered the questions about the Vinaya whereas Phra Ananda answered the questions about the Dhamma. Phra Ananda answered the questions by starting with "Avammesutam" which means I've heard thus from the Lord Buddha or from other Perfected Disciples such as Phra Sariputra.

The second Sangiti was held in 100 B.E. The Lord Buddha's Sayings had not at the time been separated into three parts just yet. The arrangement of the Dhamma-Vinaya into three parts called the Tripitaka did not occur until the third Sangiti, which took place in 236 B.E. at the city of Pataliputra in India during the reign of Asoka the Great.

The term Tripitaka comes from the Pali term "Tipitaka". The Tripitaka consists of the Vinayapitaka, the Suttantapitaka, and the Abhidhammapitaka.

The word "Pitaka" means "basket". The Dhamma-Vinaya has been divided into three baskets or three main categories. The Lord Buddha's disciplinary rules form the category called the Vinayapitaka. The Lord Buddha's Teachings form two separate categories: the Suttantapitaka or the Suttas and the Abhidhammapitaka. The Suttantapitaka or the Suttas are the Dhamma lectures which the Lord Buddha gave to different individuals on different occasions. However, the part of the Dhamma, which was given as topics only such as mind, mental factors, form, Nibbana but did not indicate where or to whom it was given, these Teachings are placed in the Abhidhammapitaka.

¹ *Suttantapitaka Dīgha-nikāya Mahāvagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 13, no. 141, p. 320

² Phradhammakittivong. **Kam Wat** [Dictionary for Buddhist Studies], B.E. 2548, p. 1041

Therefore, the Suttas and the Abhidhamma were not something new and added later but they were the Lord Buddha's original sayings which were recorded in the same way that Phra Dabbamallaputra arranged the monks' lodging, "Monks who memorized the Suttas, he arranged for them to lodge together so that they could recite the Suttas together. Monks who memorized the Vinaya, he arranged for them to lodge together so that they could consider the Vinaya together. Monks who memorized the Abhidhamma, he arranged for them to lodge together so that they could converse about the Abhidhamma together."³

In those days the Lord Buddha's Teachings were not written down just yet. They were memorized by venerable monks and passed on orally to new monks who in turn were responsible for memorizing them and passing them on to new generation monks. Once the Teachings could be memorized, the monks would chant them together to make sure that everything was correctly memorized. It is for these reasons that the tradition of chanting the Teachings, memorizing them, and passing them on to others was born. This learning system is called "Mukhapatha". It means learning from the teacher's recitations.

The Tripitaka had been kept and passed on through Mukhapatha until it was written down on palm leaves for the first time during the fifth Sangiti, which was held in Sri Lanka in 433 B.E. during the reign of King Vattagamaniabhaya.⁴ The language used was "Magadha". It was written, "In the fifth Buddhist Era, the Sangha in Sri Lanka were discussing the fact that the memory of each individual was becoming limited and in such a way that memorizing the entire Dhamma-Vinaya was becoming a difficult feat. Therefore, the fifth Sangiti was held and the Tripitaka was written down in the Magadha language, which was the language used by our Lord Buddha."⁵

Another name used to call the Magadha language is "Pali" which means "original". This word is also used to mean a dike which is built around a paddy field to contain water for use in the rice paddies. Both meanings of the word "Pali" signify firstly that the Tripitaka is original and secondly that it is well contained in such a way as to prevent its integrity from being violated. In other words, it means that any teachings outside of the Tripitaka are not part of the Dhamma. Therefore, it should be correctly understood that "Pali" is not the name of a language but the name of the language used by the Lord Buddha is Magadha or Magadhi. This was the language used by the Magadha people during the Lord Buddha's time.

However, most people are more familiar with the term "Pali language" than the term "Magadha language". Therefore, whenever people refer to the language of the Tripitaka, they often use the term "Pali language".

³ *Vinayapiṭaka Mahāvagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 3, no. 541, p. 448

⁴ Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. **The Tripitaka – Thai Version**, B.E. 2539, vol. 4, p. [1]

⁵ Somdejphrasaṅgharājā. **Dhammadussadi**, B.E. 2539, p. 25

It has been a Buddhist tradition that all Sanghakamma or Sangha ceremonies are performed in the Pali language. These include the ordination ceremony and all of the recitations. Many Pali words have been incorporated into the Thai language especially words which have Buddhist significance such as the words used to call the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha.

The first written record of the Tripitaka was made using Singhala alphabets. Until then the Pali version of the Lord Buddha's Sayings had been passed down orally. Later, other countries had used their own alphabets to write the Pali words down on the palm leaves. Nowadays the Tripitaka has been written down using the alphabets of different languages such as the Sinhala alphabets of Lakka, the Devanagari alphabets of India, the Khom alphabets, the Burmese alphabets, the Thai alphabets, and the Roman alphabets of the Pali Text Society in the U.K.

The Thai alphabets version of the Tripitaka first came into existence during the reign of King Rama V between 2431 and 2436 B.E. The king had the Tripitaka written down using the Thai alphabets by copying the Tripitaka, which had been written down using the Khom alphabets. The completed Thai version of the Tripitaka had been checked, corrected, and printed in book form. The entire Thai Tripitaka makes up thirty-nine volumes. This is the first time that the Thai Tripitaka was printed in book form.⁶

During the reign of King Rama VII between 2468 and 2473 B.E., the king had the Tripitaka rechecked and reprinted into forty-five volumes. These volumes are called the Tripitaka Siamrath version. They were printed at Mahamakutrajavidyalaya. Later, this institution translated the Commentary and added the translation to the Tripitaka as an appendix. This version contains ninety-one volumes. Later still in 2539 B.E., Mahaculalongkornrajavidyalaya printed its own version of the Thai Tripitaka.

The Commentary is the text which explains the Tripitaka. It was written around 956 B.E. There are other texts as well such as Tika and Anutika. The Tika or Sub-Commentary is the text which explains the Commentary. It was written around 1586 B.E. The Anutika or Sub-subcommentary is the text which explains the Tika or the Sub-Commentary. The Tripitaka, the Commentary, the Tika, and the Anutika are important Buddhist texts with the Tripitaka being the most important, since it contains the Lord Buddha's Sayings.

⁶ Phramayteedhammaporn (Prayoon Dhammacitto). **Tripitakaparidas**, B.E. 2538, p. 3

6.2 The Dhamma-Virtues

The Lord Buddha talks about the Dhamma-Virtues in the Vattthupama Sutta, “Svākhāto Bhagavatā Dhammo Sanditthiko Akāliko Ehipassiko Opanayiko Paccattang Veditabbo Vinnūhī ti.”⁷

From this saying of the Lord Buddha, it can be summarized that the Dhamma possesses six virtues.

1. Svākhāto Bhagavatā Dhammo

It means the Dhamma which was well-said by the Lord Buddha.⁸

Svākhāto means “well-said”. The Dhamma taught by the Lord Buddha can lead the practitioner to meet with peace and happiness. “Well-said” means nothing bad in that the Lord Buddha’s Teachings never cause any harm to the practitioner but lead him to happiness instead.

The Dhamma includes the Noble Eightfold Path. This includes Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. If we consider these virtues carefully, we will realize that whoever practices these virtues will meet with good results not only in the Dhamma World but in the secular world as well.

2. Sanditthiko

It means whoever has attained the Dhamma can see the Dhamma.⁹ Whoever practices the Dhamma can see the Dhamma. It is like the scientist conducting experiments and seeing for himself the results of his experiments. Or it is like the biologist looking at a microbe using a microscope. However, Sanditthiko means seeing with the Dhammakaya-Eye.

3. Akāliko

It means the Dhamma is timeless.¹⁰ Whoever practices the Dhamma will receive the respective results anytime anywhere. The Lord Buddha says, “There should be righteous monks. The world should never be devoid of Arahats.”¹¹

⁷ *Suttantapiṭaka Majjhimanikāya Mūlapaṇṇāsa. Vattathupama Sutta.* Siamrath Pali Language, vol. 12, no. 95, p. 67

⁸ *Suttantapiṭaka Aṅguttaranikāya Tikanipāta. Adhipateyya Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 34, no. 479, p. 186

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

The Dhamma is true. It is perfect knowledge; therefore, it remains true in every age and every era. The Dhamma is different from secular knowledge in that secular knowledge changes with time because it is not perfect knowledge. For example, at one point it was believed that a lighter object will fall to the ground more slowly than a heavier object. This belief was abandoned when Galileo demonstrated at the Pizza Tower that two lumps of lead weighing twenty and ten pounds respectively reached the ground at the same time.¹²

4. Ehipassiko

It means people should come and see for themselves.¹³ The reason is the Dhamma is good and true. Whoever has practiced the Dhamma will want to call others to come and see that it is good and true.

The Lord Buddha does not have to force or ask anyone to believe His Teachings. He does however invite everyone to come and see, and to prove the teachings to themselves. Let the practitioner see for himself whether the Dhamma is good or not.

5. Opanayiko

It means the Dhamma should be embraced.¹⁴ One should embrace the Dhamma because it is good and true. One embraces the Dhamma by practicing it.

6. Paccattang Veditabbo Vinnūhīti

It means the Dhamma is a personal experience¹⁵ because it can be known by the person who penetrates it. This aspect is like Sanditthiko. The difference is that Sanditthiko means seeing while **Paccattang Veditabbo Vinnūhī** means knowing. Only the person that practices the Dhamma can know how good it really is.

When a person eats, he becomes full. No one else can make him feel full; neither can he make anyone else feel full. It is like trying to explain to someone who has never eaten a green mango what a green mango tastes like. It does not work because the only way anyone can know what a green mango tastes like is to eat it himself.¹⁶

¹¹ *Suttantapiṭaka Dīgha-nikāya Mahāvagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 13, no. 138, p. 318

¹² Thawee Muktharakosa. *Great Scientists of the World*, B.E. 2548, p. 132

¹³ *Suttantapiṭaka Aṅguttaranikāya Tikanipāta. Adhipateyya Sutta*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 34, no. 479, p. 186

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Phrasathitvanna (Pijit Thitavanno). *Kuamsamkankongphraratanatri* [The Importance of Triple Gem], B.E. 2547, p. 164

6.3 Overview of the Lord Buddha's Teachings

On one occasion, our Lord Buddha was staying at Sisapavana in the city of Kosambi. He picked up some leaves of the Pterocarpus tree and said to the venerable monks, “Compare the number of leaves that I have in my hand to the number of leaves remaining on the tree, which do you reckon is greater?”

The venerable monks answered, “The number of leaves remaining on the tree is greater, Most Exalted One.”

The Lord Buddha said, “Monks, the knowledge that I possess can be compared to the number of leaves remaining on the tree and yet I did not teach it to you. Do you know why?”

The reason is such knowledge is not useful... It is not conducive to the attainment of Enlightenment... It cannot lead to Nibbana... Therefore, I did not teach it to you.

What I do teach you is about Dukkha, Dukkhasamudaya, Dukkhanirodha, and Dukkhanirodhagaminipatipada.

I have taught you these things because they are useful to your attainment of Enlightenment and Nibbana. Therefore, all of you should endeavor to know these things for yourselves.”¹⁷

From this saying of the Lord Buddha we learn that the Dhamma is about Dukkha, Dukkhasamudaya, Dukkhanirodha, Dukkhanirodhagaminipatipada. In other words, the Dhamma is about the Four Noble Truths.

Before the Lord Buddha's attainment of Complete Nibbana, He talked about the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha, the Magga, and other practices. The Dhamma here includes the Four Noble Truths while the Magga and other practices are Dukkhanirodhagaminipatipada which is part of the Four Noble Truths. The Magga and other practices are called the Noble Eightfold Path.

The term “Ariyasac” comes from the word “Ariya” and the word “Sac”. Ariya means sublime whereas Sac means the truth. Therefore, “Ariyasac” means the sublime truth. Details about “Ariyasac” are as follows:

¹⁷ *Suttantapiṭaka Samyuttanikāya Mahāvaḷavagga Sīsapāvanavagga*. Bangkok : Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Press, vol. 19, no. 1101, p. 613

6.3.1 Details about “Ariyasacca”

“Ariyasacca” has four parts and these include Dukkha or Suffering, Dukkhasamudaya or the Cause of Suffering, Dukkhanirodha or the Cessation of Suffering, and Dukkhanirodhagaminipada or the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering.

1. Dukkhaariyasac¹⁸

Dukkhaariyasac means the sublime truth about suffering.

Dukkha means a condition which is difficult to sustain. Such is the condition of all things and all living beings because everything and every being undergo birth and death in accordance with its own make-up and this condition is not subject to control.

There are twelve categories of Dukkha. These include Jatidukkha, Jaradukkha, Byadhidukkha, Maranadukkha, Sokadukkha, Paridevadukkha, Domanassadukkha, Upayasadukkha, Dukkhadukkha, Appiyehisampayogadukkha, and Piyehivippayogadukkha, and Yampicchamnalabhatitampidukkha. These twelve categories of Dukkha can be summarized as “Upadanakhandha-5” which means the suffering that comes from attachment to the Five Aggregates.

1. Jatidukkha means the suffering that comes from birth.
2. Jaradukkha means the suffering that comes from aging.
3. Byadhidukkha means the suffering that comes from sickness.
4. Maranadukkha means the suffering that comes from death.
5. Sokadukkha means the suffering that comes from grief.
6. Paridevadukkha means the suffering that comes from longing for someone or something.
7. Dukkhadukkha means the suffering that comes from physical discomfort.
8. Domanassadukkha means the suffering that comes from worries.
9. Upayasadukkha means the suffering that comes from vengeance.
10. Appiyehisampayogadukkha means the suffering that comes from encountering what one hates.
11. Piyehivippayogadukkha means the suffering that comes from being separated from what one loves.
12. Yampicchamnalabhatitampidukkha means the suffering that comes from disappointment.

¹⁸ *Suttantapiṭaka Dīgha-nikāya Mahāvagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 14, no. 294-295, p. 232

These twelve categories of Dukkha can be summarized as “Upadanakhandha-5” which means the suffering that comes from attachment to the Five Aggregates or Khandha-5. Such suffering comes from the fact that human beings and other living beings are made up of the Five Aggregates which include corporeality or Rupa, feeling or Vedana, perception or Sanna, mental formations or Sankhara, and consciousness or Vinnana. These Five Aggregates are contaminated with defilements. Defilements are the cause of Upadana or attachment. It is for the reason that we believe Khandha-5 belongs to us that we experience these twelve categories of Dukkha.

Now, if we know to consider the Five Aggregates or Khandha-5 as our temporary home, then when something happens to them we will not experience Dukkha and even if we do, the experience will not be as intense. For example, when we look at our self in the mirror and see the obvious signs of the aging process, we do not become overwrought because we realize that our body is merely our temporary home. Moreover, it does not belong to us. This can be compared to a divorced couple that no longer cares if another person decides to remarry, since he/she no longer belongs to her/him. Therefore, it can be concluded that the basic cause of suffering or Dukkha is Upadana or attachment, and the cause of attachment is craving or Tanha.

2. Dukkhasamudayaariyasac¹⁹

Dukkhasamudayaariyasac means the sublime truth about the cause of suffering. Here, the cause of suffering is “Tanha” or craving.²⁰ Craving causes attachment to the Five Aggregates. We believe the Five Aggregates belong to us and we want to be able to control them. The fact that we cannot control them brings upon suffering or Dukkha.

1) The Types of Craving or Tanha

There are three different types of craving or Tanha: Kammatanha or craving for sensual pleasures, Bhavatanha or craving for existence, and Vibhavatanha or craving for non-existence.

Kammatanha means craving for the five sensual pleasures.²¹ These include corporeality, sound, smell, taste, and touch. It goes without saying that most of us would like a good-looking boyfriend or girlfriend. We enjoy beautiful music, lovely scents, delicious food, comfortable furniture, etc.

Bhavatanha: Bhava comes from the Pali words Bhu and Dhatu which mean existence.²²

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 236

²⁰ *Papañcasudhanī Aṭṭhakathā-Majjhimanikāya Uparipaññāsa. Aṭṭhakathā-chavisodhana Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 22, p. 227

²¹ *Sumangalavilāsinī Aṭṭhakathā-dīgha-nikāya Mahāvagga.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 14, p. 356

²² Dhammakaya Pariyatti Dhamma School. **Pali Grammar**, B.E. 2545, p. 117

Bhavatanha means craving for existence. It means wanting what one is and what one has to last forever. Bhavatanha is caused by Kammatanha. Kammatanha causes one to want to have children, cars, house, etc., and once one has obtained these things one suffers Bhavatanha in that one wants these things to last forever.

Another meaning of Bhavatanha is craving for the sphere of existence.²³ Luang Pu Wat Paknam explained that the sphere of existence here means the Form Sphere which is the dwelling of Form Brahma beings. The Form Sphere consists of sixteen realms. Form Brahma beings crave Rupajhana or Absorptions. Rupajhana has four levels. These include Pathamajhana or the First Absorption, Dutiyajhana or the Second Absorption, Tatiyajhana or the Third Absorption, and Catutathajhana or the Fourth Absorption. These four absorptions give rise to the kind of happiness that is far superior to the happiness experienced in the Sense Sphere. As a result, attachment to the Rupajhana is far deeper and stronger than attachment to sensual pleasures.

Vibhavatanha means craving for non-existence. It means that whatever a person does not want to be or have, he does not wish it to happen to himself or his loved ones. For example, a person does not want himself or his loved ones to have AIDS. He does not want himself or his loved ones to age, get sick, or die. Etc.

Another meaning of Vibhavatanha is craving for non-existence.²⁴ Luang Pu Wat Paknam explained that non-existence here means the Non-Form Sphere. The Non-Form Sphere is the dwelling of Non-Form Brahma beings and consists of four realms. Non-Form Brahma beings crave the different levels of Arupajhana or Non-Form Absorptions which lead to rebirth in the Non-Form Sphere. The kind of happiness derived from Arupajhana is far superior to that derived from Rupajhana.

Form and Non-Form Brahma beings are of the understanding that they have escaped from suffering, hence, have attained Nibbana. This misunderstanding causes these beings to be stuck where they are.

2) The Relationship between Tanha and Other Defilements

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Tanha belongs to the family of defilements called Lobha or greed. Tanha arises out of the power of craving. Raga arises out of the power of pleasure. Nandi arises out of the power of engrossment. Avijja or ignorance is in turn the root cause of Tanha.

Tanha, in turn, gives rise to Dosa or anger. One wants something but does not get it, one becomes frustrated. One wants one's girlfriend or boyfriend to be in love with one but when the girlfriend or boyfriend loves someone else, one becomes very angry. Dosa or anger can drive one to commit murder when love goes awry.

²³ *Sumangalavilāsinī Aṭṭhakathā-dīgha-nikāya Mahāvagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 14, p. 356

²⁴ Ibid.

3) The Nature of Tanha

Tanha or craving causes human beings not to know the word “enough”. It causes most of us to try to satisfy our perpetual craving with sensual pleasures. The Lord Buddha says, “Even two solid gold mountains cannot satisfy a person.”²⁵ Therefore, Tanha or craving can be compared to the sea which is never satiated with water.

It is said that we should look at half a glass of water as being half-full rather than half-empty. But however way we may look at it, we still feel that more water can be added to the glass.

Most of us still feel that we do not have enough and we want more of this or that. We have never been taught the fact that however much we seek be they money, things, and love, we are very much like that half a glass of water. The craving in our heart never stops, the size of the glass becomes bigger and bigger but we are never satisfied.²⁶

3. Dukkhanirodhaariyasac

Dukkhanirodhaariyasac means the extinguishment of all craving.²⁷ The word “Nirodha” means extinguishment. Therefore, Dukkhanirodhaariyasac means “The sublime truth about the cessation of suffering”.

“Nirodha” is another name for Nibbana. In the Commentary, it was written, “Asesaviraganirodho: It is the extinguishment of craving. It is another name for Nibbana. In Nibbana, all Tanha is extinguished. Therefore, Nibbana means the extinguishment of craving. In Nibbana, Tanha or craving is abandoned, given up, released, and detached. Nibbana is the place where craving is abandoned, given up, released, and detached. Nibbana is called by many names but all of them mean the same thing ...”²⁸

Our Lord Buddha divides Nibbana into two types: Saupadisesanibbana and Anupadisesanibbana.²⁹

- 1) **Saupadisesanibbana** means a Bhikku or a monk who has attained Arahatsip. He is free from Samyojana or Fetters. He is emancipated through right knowledge. His Raga, Dosa, and Moha have been completely extinguished. However, he still experiences emotions. He still experiences happiness and unhappiness because he still possesses his five sense-faculties or Indriya-5.

²⁵ *Suttantapiṭaka Samyuttanikāya Sagāthavagga. Ratja Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 25, no. 477, p. 53

²⁶ Titinart Na Pattaloong. *Kemtitjivit*, B.E. 2530, p. 78-79

²⁷ *Suttantapiṭaka Samyuttanikāya Mahāvalavagga. Tathāgata Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 31, no. 1665, p. 421

²⁸ *Sumamgalavilāsini Aṭṭhakathā-dīgha-nikāya Mahāvagga. Aṭṭhakathā-satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 14, p. 357-359

²⁹ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Itivuttaka. Dhātu Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 45, p. 304

The Most Venerable Phrabhavanaviriyakhun has this to say about Saupadisesa-nibbana: Saupadisesanibbana is Nibbana which exists inside our body. It can also be called “Living Nibbana”. A personage that has attained Phra Dhammakaya and has extinguished all defilements but is still living in the flesh and possesses all the five sense-faculties can experience the pure bliss of Nibbana.³⁰

- 2) **Anupadisesanibbana** means a Bhikku or a monk who has attained Arahatsip. He is free from Samyojana or Fetters. He is emancipated through right knowledge. The Bhikku or the monk can no longer be dominated by defilements such as craving, etc.

The Most Venerable Phrabhavanaviriyakhun has this to say about Anupadisesa-nibbana: It is Nibbana which exists outside our body and is sometimes called “Dead Nibbana”. It means that once the Five Aggregates or Khandha-5 is no more, Phra Dhammakaya who dwells in Saupadisesanibbana falls into the center of His body and enters Anupadisesanibbana. This is the point called “Ayatananibbana”. This is the place where Ariya personages strive to reach.³¹

4. Dukkhanirodhagaminipatipadaariyasac

The term “Patipada” means the path, the conduct, or the practice.

Dukkhanirodhagaminipatipadaariyasac means “the sublime practice which brings about the cessation of suffering”. This sublime practice is called “The Noble Eightfold Path” or “Atthangikamagga” and it includes Right View or Sammasamadhi, Right Thought or Sammasankappa, Right Speech or Sammavaca, Right Action or Sammakammanta, Right Livelihood or Sammaajiva, Right Effort or Sammavayama, Right Mindfulness or Sammasati, and Right Concentration or Sammasamadhi.”³²

In the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, the Lord Buddha said: the Noble Eightfold Path is “Majjhimapatipada” or “the Middle Way”. It is the path which is distant from the two extremes of Kamasukhallikanuyoga and Attakilamathanuyoga.

Kamasukhallikanuyoga means being involved in worldly happiness as in the case of ordinary individuals.

Attakilamathanuyoga means being involved in self-mortification as in the case of ascetics who believe it to be the way to extinguish defilements. Some may starve themselves. Others may lie down on a bed of thorns, restrict their breaths, wearing no clothing, etc.

³⁰ Phrabhavanaviriyakhun (Dattajeevo Bhikkhu). *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, B.E. 2537, p. 146

³¹ Ibid.

³² *Abidhammapiṭaka Vibhaṅg*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 6, no. 13, p. 44

Our Lord Buddha says, "...the Middle Way is distant from the two extremes. I have attained Self-Enlightenment through supreme insight. I have gained sight. I have gained the Nanas which lead to quietude, supreme knowledge, enlightenment, and Nibbana."³³

The Noble Eightfold Path or "Atthangikamagga" can be divided into two types: Lokiyamagga and Lokuttaramagga. The Lord Buddha says, "There are two kinds of Right View or Sammaditthi: The first is Sasava Right View where Sasava is the name of defilements or Kilesa. This first kind of Right View exerts its effects on the Aggregates or Khandha-5. The second is Ariya Right View and it has to do with Anasava, Lokuttara, and Magga."³⁴ Therefore, the first kind of Right View is Lokiyamagga whereas the second kind of Right View is Lokuttaramagga.

1. Lokiyamagga: The Path or Magga which has to do with the world or Lokiya.

Right View or Sammaditthi consists of ten parts: Gift-giving bears good fruits, alms-giving bears good fruits, respecting those who are worthy of our respect bears good fruits, wholesome and unwholesome deeds bear their respective fruits, this world exists, the hereafter exists, we owe our parents a debt of gratitude, the Spontaneous Rising birth-mode exists, there exist righteous monks who not only can penetrate this world and the world of the hereafter through supreme insight but can also teach other living beings to do it.³⁵

These ten aspects of Right View or Sammaditthi have already been described in chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5. Here, only a summary will be presented.

- **Gift-giving bears good fruits** means that a giver can reap the real results of his action. Some examples include: A giver endears himself to other people. A giver earns merit which will follow him to bless him with happiness and success in future existences. Etc.
- **Alms-giving bears good fruits.** Alms-giving here is divided into two types. Donations made toward humanitarian causes and donations made toward the cause of Buddhism by, for example, giving to the monks and novice monks.³⁶

Alms-giving is different from gift-giving in that the latter is performed in order to express thoughtfulness such as giving someone a birthday gift. The former is performed in order to provide assistance to the needy such as disaster victims and venerable monks. Righteous monks need our assistance in order to remain in the monkhood, since they do not earn a living.

³³ Phrabhavanaviriyakhun (Dattajeevo Bhikkhu). *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, B.E. 2537, p. 146

³⁴ *Suttantapiṭaka Majjhimanikāya Upariṇāsa*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 22, no. 256, p. 342

³⁵ *Suttantapiṭaka Majjhimanikāya Upariṇāsa. Mahacattārisaka Sutta*. Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Press, vol. 14, no. 136, p. 176

³⁶ Phrabhavanaviriyakhun (Dattajeevo Bhikkhu). *Saddharungarunhangsantiphab*, B.E. 2551, p. 82-85

Alms-giving results in merit. When the receiver is a righteous monk, a large amount of merit can be earned. Merit is the source of material wealth and other good things in life.

- **Respecting those who are worthy of our respect bears good fruits.**³⁷ Homage paid to the Triple Gem results in merit and the merit earned blesses the worshipper with happiness and success.
- **Wholesome and unwholesome deeds bear their respective fruits.** In other words, the Law of Kamma exists. Wholesome deeds beget good consequences. Unwholesome deeds beget bad consequences. Every single one of our deeds has its own consequences.
- **This world exists.** This world exists for living beings that are living in other realms of existence.³⁸ In other words, each human being that is reborn here on earth comes from another realm of existence within the Three Spheres.
- **The hereafter exists.** There are other realms of existence besides earth. Death is not the end but the hereafter awaits us.
- **We owe our parents a debt of gratitude.** It matters very much how we treat our parents because our action has consequences.³⁹ In other words, if we treat our parents well, we can earn merit and merit will bless us with happiness and success. However, if we treat them badly, we will incur demerit and demerit will damn us with failure.
- **The Spontaneous Rising birth-mode exists.** It means that there exist living beings that are reborn as adult and they do not have to go through the growing-up process. These living beings include celestial beings, Petas, hell beings, etc. A human being that is reborn a celestial being will appear as an adult celestial being immediately. A male celestial being looks about twenty years old whereas a female celestial being looks about eighteen years old.
- **There exist righteous monks who not only can penetrate this world and the world of the hereafter through supreme insight but can also teach other living beings to do it.** Such righteous monks include the Lord Buddha and the Arahats.

Right Thought or Sammasankappa: It means thinking about abandoning sense-desire, thinking about abandoning thoughts of revenge, thinking about not harming others, etc.

Right Speech or Sammavaca: It means abstaining from all forms of unwholesome speech such as false speech, divisive speech, offensive speech, and nonsensical speech.

³⁷ *Aṭṭhasalini Aṭṭhakathā-dhammasaṅghni Aṭṭhakathā-nikkhepaṇḍa.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 76, p. 473

³⁸ *Sumamgalavilāsini Aṭṭhakathā-dīgha-nikāya Sīlakhandhavagga. Aṭṭhakathā- sāmāññaphala Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 11, p. 387

³⁹ *Manorothpurani Aṭṭhakathā-aṅguttaranikāya Tikanipāta. Aṭṭhakathā-aya Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 34, p. 536

Right Action or Sammakammanta: It means performing wholesome deeds and abstaining completely from unwholesome deeds such as killing, stealing, sexual misconduct.

Right Livelihood or Sammaajiva: It means not earning a living by engaging in such unethical work as trading weapons, trading human beings, trading animals to be slaughtered for food, trading intoxicants, and trading poisons which include addictive drugs. Such unethical business dealings are called Micchavanijja.

Nowadays unethical businesses or Micchavanijja come in many different forms. Therefore, it behooves all of us to choose the kind of work that is not immoral or unethical. What we do for a living should not be unwholesome work; neither should it harm people or animals.

Right Effort or Sammavayama: Another name for Sammavayama is Sammappadhana. It means endeavoring to perform the following four wholesome deeds:

- Endeavoring to keep the mind steadfast by being careful not to allow demerit which has not yet occurred to occur.
- Endeavoring to keep the mind steadfast in order to abstain from deeds of demerit which have already occurred.
- Endeavoring to keep the mind steadfast in order to cultivate the virtues which have not yet been cultivated.
- Endeavoring to keep the mind steadfast in order to improve on the virtues which have already been cultivated.⁴⁰

Right Mindfulness or Sammasati: It includes the Four Foundations of Mindfulness or Satipatthana-4. It means contemplating the Inner Bodies, being persistent, having the self-possession and awareness to destroy covetousness or Abhijjha and grief or Domanassa. It is the contemplation and seeing of Vedana within Vedana..., Citta within Citta..., Dhamma within Dhamma.

Right Concentration or Sammasamadhi: It means the mind which has been brought to a standstill so that it can attain the different Jhana levels. Sammasamadhi is different from Mijjhasamadhi in that in Sammasamadhi, our mind is kept inside our body. Luang Pu Wat Paknam taught that we must endeavor to rest our mind at the center of our body which is called the seventh base at all times. This is the position inside our body which is two fingers' width above our navel. This is the position which can lead us to attain the Path and Fruit of Nibbana. Mijjhasamadhi is practiced by resting the mind outside the body. Mijjhasamadhi cannot lead us to attain the Path and Fruit of Nibbana.

⁴⁰ *Suttantapiṭaka Dīgha-nikāya Pāṭikavagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 16, no. 230, p. 179

2. **Lokuttaramagga:** It means the Path or Magga which has to do with the Lokuttara Realm. The Lokuttara Realm is the dwelling of the Sotapannas, the Sakadagamis, the Anagamis, and the Arahats. Sammasamadhi lies at the center of the Noble Eightfold Path as stated by the Lord Buddha, “Behold monks, what is Ariya Sammasamadhi? It is when the mind comes to a standstill as a result of having attained Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, and Right Mindfulness. This state of mind is called Ariya Sammasamadhi.”

6.3.2 The Levels of Ariyasac

Ariyasac has two levels: basic and high

1. **The Basic Level of Ariyasac:** This is the level where we learn about Ariyasac and understand that it consists of Dukkha or Suffering, the Cause of Suffering which is Tanha or craving, Nirodha or the Cessation of Suffering, and the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering, which consists of the Noble Eightfold Path. We acquire such knowledge through our cognition aggregate or Vinnanakhandha.

Once we have gained such knowledge, reflected upon it, and added to it the observation of our own life and the lives of those around us, we can then gain a better understanding of Suffering, the Cause of Suffering, the Cessation of Suffering, and the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering. However, such knowledge about Ariyasac is gained through learning and reasoning at the levels of Sutamayapanna and Cintamayapanna.

2. **The High Level of Ariyasac:** This is where we put the knowledge about Ariyasac into practice until we can penetrate Ariyasac by seeing it. Knowledge of Ariyasac at the high level can only be gained through the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path via meditation until one can attain the Internal Triple Gem and see Ariyasac with the Dhammakaya-Eye. The Lord Buddha says, “Whoever has taken the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha as his refuge will see the Four Noble Truths or Ariyasac-4 which include Suffering, the Cause of Suffering, the Cessation of Suffering, and the Noble Eightfold Path which will lead him out of suffering.”⁴¹

“Whoever has taken the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha as his refuge” here means the attainment of the Internal Triple Gem and not the verbal expression of taking the Triple Gem as one’s refuge.

⁴¹ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Gāthā-Dhammapada*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 42, no. 24, p. 276-277

“...will see the Four Noble Truths...” means penetrating the Four Noble Truths with the Dhammakaya-Eye. This internal seeing comes with knowledge as a result of Phra Dhammakaya’s “Nanadassana”. Nanadassana means knowing and seeing. It can also mean perfect knowledge. This faculty is called Dhammakhandha. And Dhammakhandha belongs to Phra Dhammakaya whereas Vinnanakhandha belongs to the human body.

Phra Sarabhangha Thera said, “Whichever path was taken by the Lord Buddhas Vipassi, Sikhi, Vessabhu, Kakusandha, Konogamana, and Kasspa, our Lord Gautama Buddha has also taken that path. All the previous seven Buddhas were devoid of craving and attachment. They caused all defilements to be extinguished. They became the Buddha through the attainment of Dhammakaya. Dhammakaya is everlasting. All the Buddhas help all living beings by teaching them about the Four Noble Truths which include Suffering, the Cause of Suffering, the Cessation of Suffering, and the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering.”⁴²

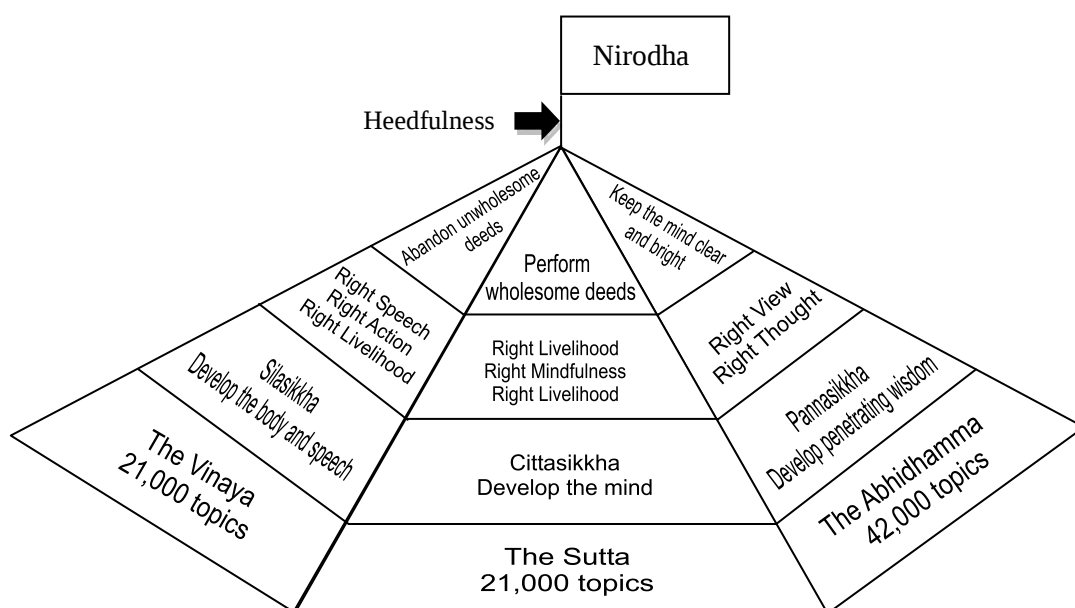
In other words, it is only when a person has attained the Internal Triple Gem that he can see the Four Noble Truths. That is, he sees them with the Dhammakaya-Eye.

⁴² *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Theraggāthā Sattakanipāta Sarabhaṇagāthā*. Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Press, vol. 26, no. 490-492, p. 422

6.4 The Interrelatedness of the Different Dhamma Principles

6.4.1 The Map of Dhamma Principles

This map has been provided by the Most Venerable Phrabhavanaviriyakhun, the Vice-Abbot of Wat Phra Dhammakaya. The map shows how all the Dhamma Principles lead the practitioner to attain Nirodha or Nibbana. Nibbana is every living being's ultimate goal.



This map shows how the different Dhamma Principles are interrelated. They can be abbreviated or expanded. The most abbreviated form of the Dhamma is “heedfulness”. And yet the Dhamma can be expanded to include 84,000 different topics or Dhammakhandha: The Vinaya contains 21,000 topics. The Sutta contains 21,000 topics, and the Abhidhamma contains 42,000 topics.

All of the Dhamma Principles can also be divided into three categories: Abandon unwholesome deeds, perform wholesome deeds, and keep the mind bright and clear. These three Dhamma categories can also be called “Sikkhattaya” or the Threefold Training. It includes Silasikkha or training in morality, Cittasikkha or training in mentality, and Pannasikkha or training in wisdom. Sikkhattaya can be expanded as the Noble Eightfold Path which includes Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

Right View and Right Thought fall under Pannasikkha. Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood fall under Silasikkha. Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration fall under Cittasikkha.

Also included in the Noble Eightfold Path are the Tenfold Wholesome Course of Action, the Ten Ways of Making Merit, and the Ten Perfections. There is one Dhamma topic called Anupubbikatha which the Lord Buddha teaches regularly to the lay people. This Dhamma topic can also be included in the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Dhamma topic on unwholesomeness can be included in the Noble Eightfold Path because it deals with things that need to be completely eliminated or removed.

Next we will present some of the Dhamma Principles which have not yet been described in detail in previous chapters in order to show clearly how they are interrelated. This will allow the student to see the connection among the different Dhamma topics and how they can converge together.

6.4.2 The Different Dhamma Topics

Here, five different Dhamma topics will be mentioned. These include 1) heedfulness, 2) abstaining from unwholesome deeds, performing wholesome deeds, and keeping the mind bright and clear, 3) the Threefold Training, 4) Anupubbikatha, and 5) Overview of the Tripitaka. These are important Dhamma topics and the student must have heard or read about them before in various Dhamma books.

1) Heedfulness

Heedfulness means not being careless, not making a slip, not being absentminded; it means being mindful at all times. Heedlessness means lack of mindfulness, making a slip, absentmindedness. Heedfulness is such an important Dhamma Principle that all of the virtues recorded in the Tripitaka can be grouped under it.

The Lord Buddha taught in the Pada Sutta that every animal's footprint...can be placed inside an elephant's footprint because an elephant's footprint is bigger than the footprints of all land animals. Likewise, all virtues are based on heedfulness. The sages of old said that heedfulness is superior to all other virtues. Therefore, a heedful monk is a monk who diligently practices the Noble Eightfold Path.⁴³

In practice, a heedful person is a person who possesses mindfulness at all times. And to possess mindfulness at all times, a person must have already practiced Right Concentration to the extent where his mind has come to a standstill at the seventh base of his body and he can attain the different levels of Ariyahood and all the way to Arahathship.

⁴³ *Suttantapiṭaka Samyuttanikāya Mahāvalavagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 30, no. 253, p. 132

2) Abstaining from unwholesome deeds, performing wholesome deeds, and keeping the mind bright and clear.

All the teachings about virtues can also be included under these three topics. In the Mahapadana Sutta about Ovadapatimokkha, the Lord Buddha had the following to say:

1. Do not commit any deeds of demerit (abstain from unwholesome deeds).
2. Cultivate virtues (perform wholesome deeds).
3. Keep your mind bright and clear.

This is the teaching of every Buddha.⁴⁴

1. Do not commit any deeds of demerit comes from the Pali words Sabbapapassa akaranan which mean do not commit unwholesome deeds with the body and the word. Sabbapapassa akaranan covers the entire Vinayapitaka and can be included in the Sikkhattaya or the Threefold Training as “Silasikkha”.
2. Cultivate virtues comes from the Pali word Kusalassupasampada. It means performing wholesome deeds with the body, word, and mind. Kusalassupasampada covers the entire Suttantapitaka and can be included in the Sikkhattaya as “Cittasikkha”.
3. Keep your mind bright and clear comes from the Pali word Sacittapariyodapanan. It means keeping one’s mind bright. Sacittapariyodapanan covers the entire Abhidhammapitaka and can be included in the Sikkhattaya as “Pannasikkha”.

3) Sikkhattaya

Sikkhattaya means the Threefold Training. In the Bhava Sutta, the Lord Buddha said, “Behold monks, what is Sikkhattaya? Sikkhattaya is Adhisilasikkha or training in higher morality, Adhicittasikkha or training in higher mentality, and Adhipannasikkha or training in higher wisdom.

When you have trained yourself well according to Sikkhattaya or the Threefold Training, I say that you have removed completely all Tanha (craving), you have released Samyojana (Fetters), you have put an end to suffering because you have abandoned conceit.”⁴⁵

Luang Pu Wat Paknam taught that there are two levels of Sikkhattaya: basic and high.

⁴⁴ *Suttantapiṭaka Dīgha-nikāya Mahāvagga. Māhāpadāna Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 13, no. 54, p. 55

⁴⁵ *Suttantapiṭaka Aṅguttaranikāya Chakkanipāta. Bhava Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 36, no. 376, p. 831

Sikkhattaya at the basic level is called Sila or morality, Citta or concentration, and Panna or wisdom. Therefore, Sikkhattaya at the basic level includes Silasikkha, Cittasikkha or Samadhisikkha, and Pannasikkha. This is the level of “cognition” where one knows about the different parts of Sikkhattaya. Once a person practices according to Sikkhattaya, the practice can lead him to attain the high level of Sikkhattaya.

Sikkhattaya at the high level is called Adhisila, Adhicitta, and Adhipanna. Therefore, Sikkhattaya at the high level includes Adhisilasikkha, Adhicittasikkha, and Adhipannasikkha. This is the level of “seeing” in that a person has practiced meditation to the point where he can “see” with the eyes of each Inner Body that Sikkhattaya is made up of the Sila Sphere, the Samadhi Sphere, and the Panna Sphere.

The word “Adhi” means higher, advanced, above.

4) Anupubbikatha

Anupubbikatha means Dhamma lectures which are given in a stepwise fashion. They have the power to cleanse the listener’s mind. They proceed from topics which are easy to understand to topics which are increasingly more profound. The purpose of Anupubbikatha is to prepare the listener’s mind for the ultimate Dhamma lecture which has to do with the Four Noble Truths.

Anupubbikatha is made up of:

1. Danakatha: These are Dhamma lectures which involve alms-giving.
2. Silakatha: These are Dhamma lectures which involve morality.
3. Saggakatha: These are Dhamma lectures which involve celestial wealth in that celestial wealth is the result of alms-giving and Precepts observation.
4. The harm, depravity, and gloominess caused by sense-desire.
5. The fruits of renouncing sense-desire.

Actually, Anupubbikatha is an expanded version of the Three Ways of Making Merit. These include alms-giving, Precepts observation, and meditation practice. The expanded part is called Saggakatha. Saggakatha deals with celestial wealth which results from alms-giving and Precepts observation.

The fourth and fifth parts of Anupubbikatha point out the fact that all celestial wealth is the source of worldly happiness, which only causes living beings to be trapped indefinitely in the round of rebirth.

Once the listener can penetrate the harm caused by sense-desire, he is ready to listen to the Dhamma lecture on the Four Noble Truths whose ultimate aim is to cause the listener to practice the Noble Eightfold Path by practicing meditation. When the listener has practiced meditation to the point where he can attain the Internal Triple Gem, he will be able to gradually extinguish defilements until all defilements are eventually removed.

5) An Overview of the Tripitaka

The Dhamma in an expanded form consists of 84,000 topics or 84,000 Dhammakhandha. These can be divided into three categories: The Vinayapitaka, the Suttantapitaka, and the Abhidhammapitaka. The Vinayapitaka consists of 21,000 topics. The Suttantapitaka consists of 21,000 topics. And the Abhidhammapitaka consists of 42,000 topics.

The Tripitaka can be related to the Sikkhattaya or the Threefold Training and the Ovadapatimokkha as follows:

The Vinayapitaka is Silasikkha: Abstain from all deeds of demerit.

The Suttantapitaka is Cittasikkha: Perform wholesome deeds.

The Abhidhammapitaka is Pannasikkha: Keeping our mind bright and clear.

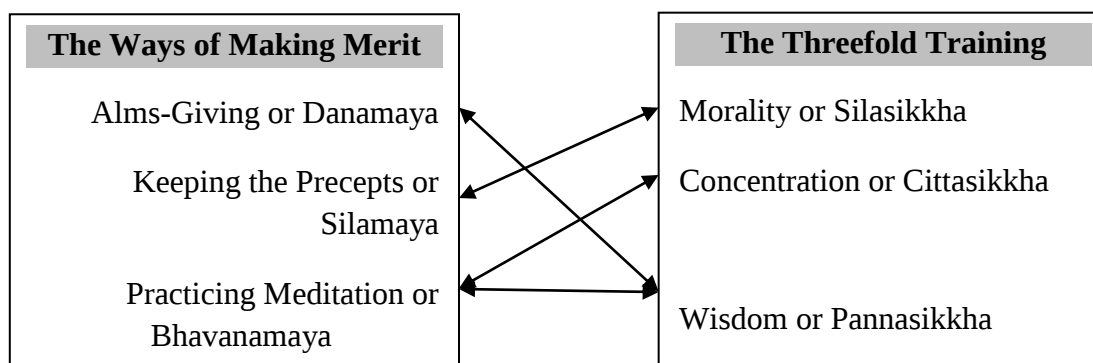
6.4.3 The Interrelatedness of Dhamma Principles

Here we will mention only four examples of such interrelatedness: The interrelatedness between The Ways of Making Merit and The Threefold Training, the interrelatedness between The Ways of Making Merit and The Ten Perfections, the interrelatedness between The Noble Eightfold Path and The Ten Perfections, and the interrelatedness between the Noble Eightfold Path and Unwholesomeness.

1) The Interrelatedness between the Ways of Making Merit and the Threefold Training

The Ways of Making Merit include alms-giving, Precepts observation, and meditation practice whereas The Threefold Training includes morality, concentration, and wisdom.

The Ways of Making Merit can be incorporated into The Threefold Training as follows:



Alms-giving can be incorporated into wisdom since alms-giving is part of Right View and Right View is part of wisdom in the Threefold Training.

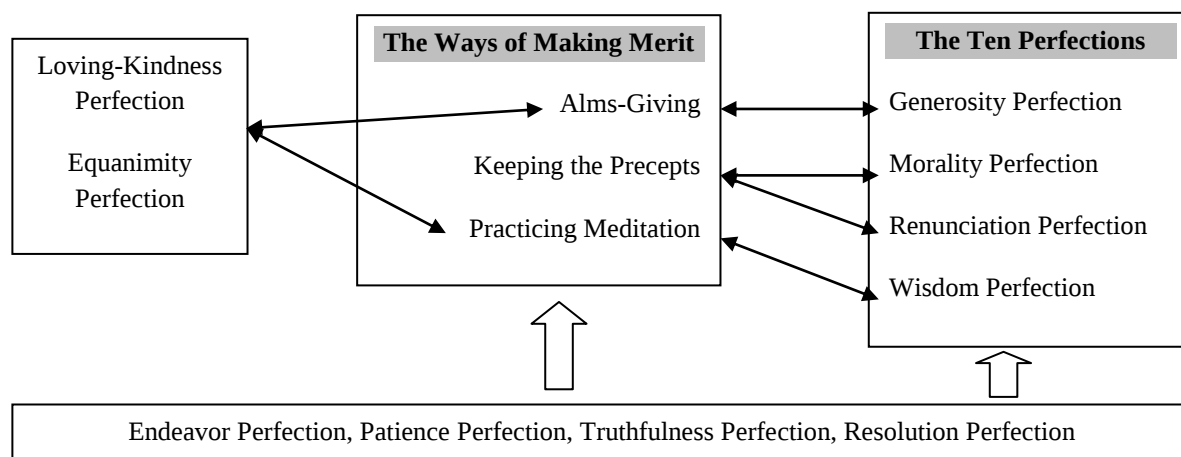
Silamaya corresponds directly with Silasikkha and Bhavanamaya corresponds with Cittasikkha. Since Cittasikkha is the practice of meditation, and Panna is the fruit of meditation practice; therefore, when one practices alms-giving, keeps the Precepts, and practices meditation, one is essentially practicing the Threefold Training or the Noble Eightfold Path.

When one practices The Ways of Making Merit and The Threefold Training, one is performing “wholesome deeds” through one’s body, word, and mind.

2) The Interrelatedness between the Ways of Making Merit and the Ten Perfections

Perfections or Parami is merit in a highly concentrated form. When the amount of merit we have accumulated increases to a certain point, it will be condensed into Perfections. Perfections can also be gained through putting our life on the line for the purpose of merit accumulation. Merit gained through such a manner is highly concentrated and becomes Perfections.

When we practice The Ways of Making Merit by putting our life on the line, we are essentially pursuing all Ten Perfections as illustrated in the following diagram:



From the above diagram we can see how alms-giving and keeping the Precepts correspond with Generosity Perfection and Morality Perfection respectively.

Renunciation Perfection is considered to be part of keeping the Precepts, since renunciation means abandoning sense-desire by practicing chastity and taking up the religious life. When a person takes up the religious life as a novice monk, he must keep the Ten Precepts. As a monk, he must keep the 227 Precepts. Or a person can remain a householder but chooses to practice chastity by keeping the Eight Precepts.

It can be seen that renunciation involves chastity practice by keeping the Eight Precepts, the Ten Precepts, or the 227 Precepts. However, people that keep the Five Precepts are still involved in sense-desire.

Wisdom Perfection corresponds with meditation practice, since meditation practice is the best way to pursue Wisdom Perfection. Such is the kind of wisdom that can remove ignorance or Avijja, which causes the round of rebirth. Other kinds of wisdom are cultivated in order to support the pursuit of Wisdom Perfection through meditation practice but they cannot remove ignorance or Avijja.

Endeavor Perfection, Patience Perfection, Truthfulness Perfection and Resolution Perfection are Perfections which support alms-giving, Precepts observation, and meditation practice. To successfully practice alms-giving, Precepts, and meditation to the fullest extent, a person needs to exercise endeavor, patience, truthfulness, and resolution.

Loving-kindness Perfection and Equanimity Perfection correspond with alms-giving and meditation practice respectively because when one gives alms, one gives because one feels toward the receiver loving-kindness and one hopes to earn merit as well. However, no one person can help all the needy people in the world; therefore, one must exercise equanimity in this case.

Loving-kindness Perfection and Equanimity Perfection correspond with meditation practice because spreading loving-kindness to other living beings is part of meditation practice. This is generally done near the end of the session. Moreover, the mind of a regular practitioner of meditation tends to be calm and stable. It is not easily perturbed. It can withstand both blame and praise. As a result, a regular practitioner of meditation can be said to be pursuing Equanimity Perfection as well.

When we practice alms-giving, Precepts, and meditation by putting our life on the line on a daily basis, we are essentially pursuing all Ten Perfections simultaneously. The Ten Perfections or Parami-10 can be condensed into Upaparami-10. And Upaparami-10 can be further condensed into Paramatthaparami-10. When added together, they become Parami-30.

3) The Interrelatedness between the Noble Eightfold Path and the Ten Perfections

As mentioned earlier, there are two levels to the Noble Eightfold Path or “Atthangikamagga”: Lokiyamagga and Lokuttaramagga. Lokiyamagga is the source of merit whereas Lokuttaramagga is gained through meditation practice and it involves the attainment of Phra Dhammakaya starting from Sotapanna Dhammakaya.

The practice of Lokiyamagga gives rise to merit in the same way as the practice of the Ways of Making Merit. The merit earned from practicing Lokiyamagga is accumulated and once it reaches a certain level it is condensed into Perfections or Parami. Parami can also be accumulated directly by putting our life on the line when practicing Lokiyamagga.

Therefore, Parami-10 can be incorporated into Lokiyamagga.

Moreover when we practice Parami-10 or Lokiyamagga at an ever increasing level until it reaches the fullest extent, it can help our meditation practice to progress to the point where Lokuttaramagga can be attained. At this point, we can attain the different levels of Ariyahood and all the way to Arahatsip.

Therefore, Parami-10 or Lokiyamagga is the foundation for Lokuttaramagga. If Parami-10 or the Ten Perfections are not cultivated to the fullest extent, the highest level of Lokuttaramagga cannot be attained. It is for this reason that every Bodhisatta has to spend at least twenty Asankheyya Kappas and an additional 100,000 Kappas pursuing Perfections before they can attain Buddhahood.

4) The Interrelatedness between Atthangikamagga or the Noble Eightfold Path and Unwholesomeness

The student may wonder how unwholesomeness, which includes greed, anger, and ignorance as well as unwholesome deeds which include Kayaduccarita, Vaciduccarita, and Manoduccarita,⁴⁶ can be part of the Tripitaka. In fact, unwholesomeness and unwholesome deeds can be part of Atthangikamagga but they are the parts that must be completely eliminated in order to gain purity and attain Nibbana.

⁴⁶ **Kayaduccarita** means unwholesomeness committed through the body, **Vaciduccarita** means unwholesomeness committed through speech, and **Manoduccarita** means unwholesomeness committed through the mind.

6.5 The Important Role Habit Plays in the Practice of the Noble Eightfold Path

When we practice the Noble Eightfold Path, it means that we are performing wholesome deeds. Wholesome deeds are the source of merit and Perfections. Unwholesome deeds, on the other hand, are the source of demerit.

Habit is a thing we do on a regular basis. A person who has the habit of practicing meditation is a person who practices meditation regularly. A person who has the habit of gossiping about other people is a person who gossips about other people regularly. Habit can be good or bad. Habit follows us across lifetimes; therefore, it is imperative that we try to form only good habits. At the same time, we should try to curb our bad habits. Habits that stay with us across lifetimes are also called “innate character”.⁴⁷

In the Tripitaka, there are many stories that have to do with a person’s innate character. For example, Phra Pilindavaccha Thera, despite being an Arahant, often addressed another person by using an inferior title because he had been used to doing it throughout many previous lifetimes.⁴⁸ Every Bodhisatta and every Arahant-to-be must cultivate Parami-30 such as Generosity Perfection over and over again until it becomes a habit.

6.5.1 The Role of Habit

Habit causes us to do something regularly. Good habits cause us to perform good deeds regularly whereas bad habits cause us to perform bad deeds regularly. Good habits beget merit while bad habits beget demerit.

The Most Venerable Phrabhavanaviriyakhun says that habits are more important than knowledge. A person may have plenty of secular and Dhamma knowledge but if he has many bad habits, he can end up performing many bad deeds. He may be in the habit of smoking cigarettes, frequenting the nightlife, and using the service of prostitutes. He knows that these bad habits may very well cause him his health or even his death and yet he still does them.

6.5.2 How Is Habit Formed?

Habit is a thing we do often and almost without thinking. Habit is formed by thinking about, talking about, and doing something regularly and for a period of time. One western physician by the name of Maxwell said that “If we do something continuously for twenty-one days, it will become a habit”.

⁴⁷ The Royal Institute Dictionary Online, B.E. 2525

⁴⁸ *Manorothpurani Atthakathā-aṅuttaranikāya Ekanipāṭa*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 32, p. 428

6.5.3 The Five Rooms Used in Forming Habit

The Most Venerable Phrabhavanaviriyakhun has studied the Tripitaka in depth and has taught it to his students numbering one million throughout these past forty years. He has concluded that the place where we spend our daily life is the place where our habit is formed. There are altogether five rooms in which we spend our daily life. These include the bedroom, the bathroom, the kitchen, the dressing room, and the office or the place where we work. For students, their office is the classroom. For rice farmers, their office is the rice paddies. Etc.

Every human being spends time in these five rooms every day. We wake up in our bedroom. We go into the bathroom to wash up and use the toilet. We go into the kitchen to eat. We go into the dressing room to get dressed. We leave the house to go the office. In the evening, we return to the bedroom and the cycle continues. It is in these five rooms that our habit is formed.

6.5.4 How to Form Good Habits

We have already learnt that good or bad habits are formed in the five rooms of our life. Therefore, we are required to conduct our self properly in these five rooms so that good habits can be formed. On this subject, Phrabhavanaviriyakhun has this to say, “Good things need to be cultivated whereas bad things grow naturally on their own.” For example, we do not need to grow weed because they grow naturally on their own. This is the same way with bad habits. But rice needs to be grown. This is the same way with good habits.

The basis for forming good habits comes from managing these five rooms properly in that these rooms must be properly arranged and furnished and they must be used correctly.

- 1. The Room Itself:** We must consider what each room should be like in order for everyone in the family to form good habits. For example, the bedroom is the place for the children to form good habits by chanting sacred verses and practicing meditation at bedtime. The bedroom should then be designed in such a way as to be conducive to chanting and meditating. The room should be protected from outside noise. It should have good ventilation. It should not be hot. And there should be enough room for a small altar.

2. The Furnishings: Each room should be properly furnished and it should not contain anything that will support bad habits. For example, the bedroom should be furnished with a Buddha Image or a small altar. It should have photo albums containing pictures of merit-making activities so that we can recall our accumulated merit before we fall asleep. This way we can fall asleep in the sea of merit. The mattress should not be too soft; otherwise, we may not feel like getting up in the morning. There should not be any computer or television in the bedroom because we may end up watching shows or movies until late at night. Watching movies that contain scenes of violence is not conducive to forming good habits. There should not be inappropriate pictures on the walls of the bedroom such as pictures of movie stars or pornographic materials.

3. The People in the Room: These include the people in our Six Directions or the people around us in our daily life. They are very important because they are the role models of good and bad habits. At the front are our parents. At the back are our spouse and children. At the right are our teachers. At the left are our friends and colleagues. Above us are venerable monks. Below us are our subordinates.

All of us must meet and talk to these people almost every day in one of these five rooms. If the people in our Six Directions are mostly good people, they become good role models for us. They make us think, say, and do good things regularly. Eventually, the good things that we perform regularly become good habits. We form good habits because we are surrounded by good people in our Six Directions. On the contrary, if the people in our Six Directions are mostly bad people, we see bad role models all the time. We see how they think, say, and do bad things regularly. Eventually we will become just like them. We form bad habits because we are surrounded by bad people in our Six Directions.

4. Using the Room: The basis for using each room correctly comes from using the room in such a way that it helps us to form good habits. For example, this is what we should do when we use the bedroom.

1. We enter our bedroom no later than 10.00 p.m. at night.
2. We chant and pay homage to the Triple Gem.
3. We practice meditation and spread love and kindness to all beings.
4. We recall our deeds of merit and make a resolute wish.
5. We fall asleep in the sea of merit by resting our mind at the seventh base of our body while visualizing the crystal sphere or Phra Dhammakaya until we fall asleep. If possible, we should sleep on our right side because this is the posture that keeps us mindful and gives us the maximum health benefit.

6. We get up early.
 7. We wake up in the sea of merit. As soon as we are awake we rest our mind at the center of our body and say to our self, “I am fortunate to be alive another day. May all living beings be happy. As for me, I will surely die.” This way we will be heedful in living each and every day of our life.
 8. We make our bed after we get up.
- Etc.

When we use our bedroom in this way regularly, we will have formed good habits. We learn to be punctual. We love to make merit. We are loving and kind to our fellow beings. We exercise heedfulness in our daily life. We love to keep everything tidy. Etc. More importantly, having performed such wholesome deeds every day and every night, we will be reborn in the Celestial Realm after we depart from this world. If anyone used to habitually watch television until late at night, get up late in the morning, fall asleep without mindfulness, etc., it is time to stop these bad habits. Other rooms in our life also deserve our careful attention so that they will enable us to form good habits.

6.6 The Dhamma Principles that Support the Noble Eightfold Path

The Dhamma Principles as recorded in the Tripitaka may be divided into the three categories of human beings, society, and the environment. Compared to the courses in the secular world, what concerns human beings can be called the humanities. What concerns the society can be called social studies. And what concerns the environment can be called the sciences.

The Dhamma Principles emphasize the humanities because the Lord Buddha teaches the Dhamma in order to enable human beings to escape from suffering. The Lord Buddha uses social studies and the sciences to augment The Noble Eightfold Path which is the Dhamma Principle that has to do with being free from suffering.

6.6.1 The Dhamma Principles that Involve Social Studies

The Dhamma Principles that involve social studies deal with the way people should live together in society. The Lord Buddha teaches people to live together happily. When people in society can live together happily, they will be able to practice the Noble Eightfold Path more readily. They will not have to spend time worrying and solving problems that arise out of people living together as a community. People will have more time to practice meditation. The Dhamma Principles in this category includes political science, law, economics, speech, etc.

In addition, there is one Dhamma Principle that deals with how to be a virtuous friend or Kalayanamitra. A virtuous friend does the work of encouraging other people to perform wholesome deeds, and propagating the Lord Buddha's Teachings to the rest of the world. This Dhamma Principle is necessary because it helps people to escape from suffering. Once people can escape from suffering or find their own refuge within themselves, they will be able to live together in peace and happiness. This condition gives people all the time in the world to practice meditation in order to attain the ultimate benefit.

What we need to realize is the fact that we cannot live happily in our home as long as we have bad people for neighbors. Soon enough their action will have an impact on our life. They may harm us. They may get together to drink and make all sorts of noise until all hours of the night. They may rob us or rape our daughter. Etc.

Terrorist acts that have occurred all around the world including those carried out in the three southern provinces of Thailand attest to the fact that it is not enough for a few people to be good and decent. However, it is the duty of all good and decent people to act as a virtuous friend to other people, to tell them about the Law of Kamma, and the reality of the Hell Realm and the Celestial Realm. Acting as a virtuous friend may be difficult and we may not be able to reach everyone in the world, yet it is our duty to do the best we can. We earn merit when we perform the work of a virtuous friend. If the majority of the

people or many influential people can be reached, it will become easier for all the people in the world to live happily and peacefully with each other.

The student will be able to learn in detail about the Dhamma Principles that have to do with social studies in the course GB 203 Recipe for Success in World Social Development, GB 304 Recipe for Success in Organizational & Economic Development, GB 406 The Sciences as Explained in the Buddhist Scriptures (Tipitaka), and the courses that have to do with performing the duty of a virtuous friend. These include DF 101E The Good Friends & Their Duty, DF 202E Elementary Skills in Being a Good Friend, DF 303E Good Friend Networking, and DF 404E The Fundamentals of Different Religions.

6.6.2 The Dhamma Principles that Involve the Sciences

These Dhamma Principles deal with the physical environment which includes the galaxies and the different realms of existence. The Lord Buddha teaches these things to enable us to know the location of the different realms of existence as well as the living condition of the inhabitants of these realms. When we learn that celestial beings living in the Celestial Realm enjoy a life of luxury and ease, we feel motivated to accumulate more and more merit. However, when we learn about the horrific fate of hell beings in the Hell Realm, we feel ashamed of deeds of demerit and fearful of their ill consequences. The level of pain and suffering in the Hell Realm cannot be compared to that experienced in the Human Realm. The heat in the hell realm of Mahanarok is hundreds and thousands of times more intense than the sun. The heat in the Hell Realm is so intense that should the sun be dropped inside it, it will disintegrate instantly.

Sometimes the Lord Buddha teaches about impermanence in order to encourage His disciples to develop non-attachment by earnestly practicing meditation for the purpose of attaining emancipation. It was written in the Suriya Sutta that on one occasion, the Lord Buddha was staying at Ambapalivana near the city of Vesali. There, the Lord Buddha said,

“Behold monks, the Sineru Mountain is 84,000 yojanas⁴⁹ in length and 84,000 yojanas in width. Its base reaches down into the ocean at the depth of 84,000 yajanas. It is 84,000 yojanas in height. Sometimes it does not rain there for hundreds of thousands of years and the vegetation wilts and dries up. Sankhara⁵⁰ is the same way in that it is impermanent and unsatisfying. One should shun it. One should release one’s attachment to it. And one should seek to be emancipated from it.

Behold monks, at a certain time the third sun appears. As a result, the fourth, the fifth and the sixth sun also appear.

⁴⁹ One yojana is equal to 16 kilometers.

⁵⁰ **Sankhara** here means all things which have been made up by pre-existing causes such as our body.

Behold monks, at a certain time the seventh sun appears. As a result, the great landmasses and the Sineru Mountain burst into flames. Behold monks, Sankhara is the same way in that it is impermanent and unsatisfying. One should shun it. One should release one's attachment to it. And one should seek to be emancipated from it.”⁵¹

⁵¹ *Suttantapiṭaka Aṅguttaranikāya Saṭṭakanipāta. Suriya Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 37, no. 63, p. 214-219

6.7 The Law of Kamma

The Law of Kamma was already mentioned in part in chapter 3 under 3.2.3. Here five additional points will be made. These include the fruits of Kamma are unthinkable, how Kamma yields its fruits, living beings are different as a result of Kamma, examples of the fruits of Kamma, and the correlation between the Law of Kamma and science.

6.7.1 The Fruits of Kamma Are Unthinkable

In the Acintita Sutta, the Lord Buddha said, “The fruits of Kamma are unthinkable. People should not think about them. Whoever thinks about these things will only become insane and experience hardship.”⁵² The reason is only personages that have attained Phra Dhammakaya through meditation practice are capable of penetrating the fruits of Kamma. These personages can employ the Dhammakaya-Eye and the Dhammakaya-Insight to investigate a particular Kamma and its various fruits. Ordinary individuals cannot penetrate such Higher Knowledge in the same way that most kindergarteners cannot understand Quantum Physics and Differential Equations.

In certain situations, Kamma and its fruits may be evident to us. For example, a child that is a good student can end up with good grades. However, the fruits of the Kamma which was performed in a previous existence are not something that ordinary people can know. A person may think about them all he wants and he still cannot know them. We cannot tell what Kamma we performed in our previous lives that causes us to have the kind of life that we are having right now. We may be able to guess at certain Kamma and its fruits by studying the Tripitaka but it is still just a guess. All of the Kamma that each human being has performed throughout his countless existences is simply overwhelming. A particular effect may result from different causes. It is like having a meal that consists of different things, we cannot tell exactly which part of our meal goes to nourish and maintain the different parts of our body. All we know is that our body is nourished and maintained by the food that we eat.

6.7.2 How Kamma Yields Its Fruits

It was mentioned in chapter 3 that Kamma yields its fruits at two levels. The first level is the occurrence of merit and demerit which result from wholesome deeds and unwholesome deeds respectively. The second level is how the fruits of merit and demerit dictate a person’s life.

Here, the fruits of Kamma will be divided into four levels: mind, personality, lifestyle, and the hereafter.

⁵² *Suttantapīṭaka Aṅguttaranikāya Catukanipāta. Acintita Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 35, no. 77, p. 235

- 1. At the Mind Level:** If the fruits of Kamma are in the form of merit, it will cause the person to have a healthier mind in that he will be happy, calm, steady, and more effective. When our mind is bright and clear, it works more effectively. It can process thought quickly, deeply, broadly, and systematically. As a result, we can make decisions quickly and precisely. Merit is earned through such regular wholesome deeds as alms-giving, Precepts observation, and meditation practice.

Researchers at British Columbia University and Harvard Business School have worked together on the subject of “happiness gained from an act of merit”. Research was carried out using no less than 630 subjects, all of them American. They found that these subjects felt happier in a statistically significant manner when they gave money to other people. Professor Elizabeth Dunn said, “It’s not important how much people earn. However, people say that they feel happier when they have the opportunity to help others by giving them money. If they spend that same amount of money on themselves, they won’t feel as happy.”⁵³

If the fruits of Kamma are in the form of demerit, it will cause the person’s mind to lose its health and effectiveness. He feels unhappy, anxious, paranoid, etc. For example, a thief is always concerned that he may get caught and sent to prison. A murderer has to live in hiding, fearing that someone might come after him to avenge him of the murder, fearing the law, etc. A person’s unwholesome deeds cause his mind to be gloomy. His thought process is impaired. He is not cheerful. And his work quality becomes poorer.

- 2. At the Personality Level:** A person that gives alms, keeps the Precepts, and practices meditation regularly tends to be calm, joyful, and cheerful. He sleeps well at night. He has few worries. His countenance and complexion are bright and clear. He has self-confidence. He is dignified and bold. He feels comfortable in any situation and does everything in just the right way. And his personality will continue to improve.

A person that commits unwholesome deeds regularly tends to be aggressive, undignified, absentminded, lacking in self-confidence, etc. A person that kills animals on a regular basis harbors ruthlessness and it shows in his personality. He looks unkind and unapproachable. A person that is quick to anger will age prematurely. The reason is anger is like a fire that burns the mind and the body, causing the angry person’s skin to dry up and develop wrinkles prematurely. A liar tends not to want to meet another person’s eyes. A liar tends to look suspicious. These are but a few examples of the types of personality that are developed from unwholesome deeds.

⁵³ “Performing an Act of Merit Leads to Happiness,” **Thai Rath Newspaper Online**. B.E. 2551

- 3. At the Lifestyle Level:** The merit and demerit that had been accumulated in our previous lifetimes are the first to yield their fruits; and therefore, have the largest impact on our life. Our past merit and demerit are like a mature tree which is ready to flower and yield its fruits. The merit and demerit that are accumulated in this lifetime is like a sapling and cannot flower or yield its fruits until it becomes a mature tree. It is for these reasons that our lifestyle in this lifetime or in any lifetime depends mainly or about 70% to 80% on the merit and demerit that we had accumulated in our previous lifetimes. Only about 20% to 30% of the merit and demerit accumulated in the current lifetime yields their fruits here and now but they will yield most of their fruits in our next lifetime.

Some people have the misunderstanding that good deeds do not beget good results. Sometimes a person, despite being a good person and doing many good deeds, ends up having his reputation smeared or meets with an unfortunate circumstance. As a result, he may become discouraged because he does not know that the problems in his life right now are actually the fruits of the demerit accumulated in a previous life. For certain, the good deeds that he is doing will not become fruitless. If we can continue boldly to perform wholesome deeds despite difficult circumstances, the merit earned here and now will go to gradually erode the fruits of our past demerit such that we can eventually meet with happiness and success in this lifetime.

- 4. At the Hereafter Level:** In the Vatthupa Sutta, the Lord Buddha said, “Citte sankilitthe dugati patikankha...cite asankilitthe sugati patikankha...”⁵⁴ It means a gloomy mind leads one to the States of Unhappiness...a bright and clear mind leads one to the States of Happiness.

Dugati means the States of Unhappiness. These include the Hell Realm, the Peta Realm, the Asurakaya Realm, and the Animal Realm. Sugati means the States of Happiness. These include the Human Realm, the Celestial Realm, and the Brahma Realm.

What gives rise to a gloomy mind is demerit. And what gives rise to a bright and clear mind is merit.

A person that has accumulated a lot of demerit naturally possesses a gloomy mind. And it is his gloomy mind that causes him to be reborn in the States of Unhappiness after he dies. A person that has accumulated a lot of merit naturally possesses a bright and clear mind. And it is his bright and clear mind that causes him to be reborn in the States of Happiness. If the level of his accumulated merit is high, he will be reborn in the Brahma Realm. At a lower level, he will be reborn in the Celestial Realm. At a lower level still, he will be reborn in the Human Realm.

⁵⁴ *Suttantapiṭaka Majjhimanikāya Mūlapaṇṇāsa. Vattathupama Sutta.* Siamrath Pali Language, vol. 12, no. 92, p. 64

However, to be emancipated from the round of rebirth and enjoying eternal bliss in Nibbana, a person must accumulate merit and pursued Perfections to the fullest extent. He must also practice meditation until he can attain the Internal Triple Gem and put an end to all his defilements

Normally a person that has accumulated a lot of demerit will be reborn in the States of Unhappiness or Dugati whereas a person that has accumulated a lot of merit will be reborn in the States of Happiness or Sugati. However, there are exceptions to this rule. Some people may have accumulated a lot of demerit in their life but just before they die they have the opportunity to make merit. The merit earned causes their mind to be clear and bright and this condition causes them to be reborn in the States of Happiness. The reason is our state of mind just before and at the time of our death dictates the place of our rebirth. Cases like these are very rare, so it is best that we accumulate merit regularly so that our mind will be bright and clear all the time.

At one point, King Milinda asked the venerable monk Nagasena,

“Venerable sir, I cannot believe that a person, who had not accumulated merit for a hundred years but could think of the Lord Buddha only once, could end up being reborn in the Celestial Realm. I find that impossible to believe. I also cannot believe that after having transgressed the First Precept only once, one had to be reborn in the Hell Realm.”

The venerable monk Nagasena asked King Milinda, “When you throw a very small stone into the water, can it float?”

“It cannot, venerable sir.” The king answered.

The venerable monk asked, “What if one hundred wagons filled with stones boarded a large ship, can that ship stay afloat?”

“Yes it can, venerable sir.”

“Well then, wholesome Kamma can be compared to a ship. If the ship’s load is too heavy, the ship will sink. Likewise, when demerit is accumulated a little at a time until it increases to a critical level, rebirth in the Hell Realm will be the result. However, a person that can bail the ship out by making it lighter will be able to take the ship safely to the harbor which is Nibbana.”⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Pui Sangchay. **Milinthapanha**, B.E. 2511, p. 127

6.7.3 Kamma Causes Living Beings to Be Uniquely Different

Our Kamma dictates the way we look. It dictates our economic status. It is our bodyguard. Our Kamma is many different things to us. Kamma causes all living beings to be uniquely different.

A large number of people have been beggars since birth. To us they seem quite similar but actually they are quite different one from another. Some beggars receive plenty of coins while others have to go from place to place all the time just to receive a few coins. Likewise, there are a large number of rich people. Some are millionaires and others are billionaires.

There are differences in poor people just as there are in rich people. Some people are rich only temporarily. Their wealth may be taken away by unjust means. It may be stolen. It may be destroyed by fire or flood. Etc.

Some people's wealth comes from an inheritance and some people earn it. Some wealthy people may not be very smart and yet they manage to surprise their competitors often. They can outdo those that are far smarter than them. This is the reason that business school textbooks have to accept that intellect alone is not enough for success but a certain amount of luck is needed. In fact, the "luck" factor can render all the business theories useless because "luck" is the best guarantor of success.⁵⁶

In the Culakammavibhanga Sutta, the Lord Buddha talked about how Kamma causes living beings to be uniquely different. From this Sutta, seven conclusions about the fruits of Kamma can be made.

No.	Unwholesome Kamma		Wholesome Kamma	
	Cause	Effect	Cause	Effect
1.	Killing	Short lifespan	No killing	Long lifespan
2.	Harming others	Poor health	Not harming others	Good health
3.	Being quick to anger	Poor complexion	Being slow to anger	Good complexion
4.	Jealousy	Low level of authority	No jealousy	High level of authority
5.	Not giving alms	Scarcity	Giving alms	A lot of material wealth
6.	Arrogance	Being low-born	No arrogance	Being high-born
7.	Not learning the Dhamma from righteous monks	Low intellect	Learning the Dhamma from righteous monks	High intellect

⁵⁶ Dungtrin. *Sia Dai Kon Tai Mai Dai Aun*, B.E. 2548, p. 81-82

6.7.4 Examples of the Fruits of Kamma

The student may wonder about the cause and effect of Kamma in the above table because they may not be immediately obvious. Here, we will try to explain the fruits of alms-giving as exemplified by some of the world's richest men.

As mentioned in 6.5 that habit is what we do on a regular basis whereas innate character means the good and bad habits that have stayed with us across lifetimes.

Here we will present how alms-giving has formed part of the innate character of some of the world's richest men. It was precisely the merit earned from having given alms to the merit-field in their previous existences that causes these men to be fabulously wealthy in this lifetime. Moreover, alms-giving will be part of their innate character in future lifetimes as well. Although it is difficult to penetrate their previous lives but their economic status and their generosity in this lifetime can give us a very good idea about what their previous lives were like.

Bill Gates was the world's richest man for a total of thirteen consecutive years since 2538 to 2550 B.E. He also announced to the world that he was giving away 95% of all his wealth to the foundation which gives to charity causes. He is leaving his three children only 5% of his total wealth.⁵⁷ In 2551 B.E., Bill Gates' wealth was worth about 58,000 million dollars (about 1,800,000 million bahts). It means that he gave a total of 55,100 million dollars or about 1,700,000 million bahts to his charity foundation.

Bill Gates was asked why he did not give all of his wealth to his three children and he answered that if he gave such a vast amount of money to his children, it will not benefit society or his children. He believes that he should give the money back to society.

Another generous billionaire is Warren Buffet. He made an announcement in June, 2549 B.E., that he was donating 37,000 million dollars (about 1,158,000 million bahts) or 85% of his total wealth to five different charity organizations.⁵⁸ Recently, he donated 31,000 million dollars to Bill Gates' charity foundation.

There are other generous billionaires in the United States. These include Gordon and Betty Moore who founded the company called Intel; Eli and Edith Broad of SunAmerica Inc.; James and Virginia Stowers of American Century; Michael and Susan Dell of Dell Computer; the Walton family of Wal-Mart; Ted Turner of CNN; Jeffrey Skoll of eBay; John R. Alm of Coca-Cola, etc.

Billionaires and millionaires all over the world have recently begun to set up their own charity foundation. In Germany, private charity foundations have increased from 4,000 in 2540 B.E. to 13,000 in 2549 B.E. One leading banking institution in Switzerland revealed that a fourth of its millionaire customers are expressing intention to donate some

⁵⁷ Pissanu Ninklad. **Matichon Online**, B.E. 2549

⁵⁸ "The Donation of an American Millionaire," **Thai Rath Newspaper Online**, B.E. 2551

of their money to charity. The number of such customers has grown to 40% while 15% are beginning to talk about it.⁵⁹

In the journal “Economist” published February 25, 2549 B.E., there was an article about why very wealthy men and women wish to donate part of their wealth to charity. The main reason is that they wish to donate part of their wealth in order to repay society for all the wealth that they have gained. Some may choose to donate to their alma maters. Some may donate to a hospital or a research project aimed to find the cure for a disease that has afflicted a loved one. Some may donate to a poor country that they have visited. However, there are other wealthy individuals that donate money to charity for tax purposes.⁶⁰

Generosity has become part of these wealthy individuals’ innate character because they had given generously in their previous lives. They may not in this lifetime have the opportunity to give to the merit-field due to their religious beliefs but their generosity will remain as part of their innate character throughout their future existences.

6.7.5 The Law of Kamma and Scientific Principles

The Law of Kamma and science share one common characteristic, and it has to do with “cause and effect”. The law of cause and effect already exists in nature. The cause and effect shown in the life of all living beings arise out of “Kamma” according to the Law of Kamma. Kamma means an intentional act. And an intentional act begets consequences. Whatever we do, we will receive the consequences of our action as in the sayings: You reap what you sow. A good deed begets a good outcome. A bad deed begets a bad outcome.⁶¹

According to the Tripitaka, there are two aspects to Kamma: Kamma in the present lifetime and Kamma in the previous lifetimes. Science accepts Kamma in the present lifetime because it is evident in daily life. For example, a hard-working and honest employee will be trusted and treated kindly by his employer. A murderer will be arrested and imprisoned. A giver endears himself to the receiver. Etc.

However, previous lifetimes’ Kamma is not accepted by science because it cannot be proven by scientific means. According to Buddhism, Einstein was highly intelligent because he had pursued Wisdom Perfection in his previous existences. The merit earned by such a pursuit turns into the bright Wisdom Sphere which resides at the center of his body. This sphere can be “seen” by anyone who has achieved elevated meditative attainments. After Einstein died, this Wisdom Sphere remains in his Refined Human Body and follows him to the hereafter. Nothing remained in his physical body as it underwent the process of decomposition.

⁵⁹ “Changing of Donation - Investors and Merit Makers,” **Prachachartturakij Online**. B.E. 2549

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ *Suttantapiṭaka Samyuttanikāya Sagāthavagga. Samuddaka Sutta*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 25, no. 903, p. 487

Most scientists believe that Einstein's genius resided in his brain so they removed his brain from his body in order to study it. They tried to study the difference between Einstein's brain and the brain of ordinary people in the hope that once they could find what it was that made Einstein's brain different, they could find the way to incorporate it into the brain of ordinary people. In other words, they aimed to clone hundreds and thousands of Einstein-like people. But in reality, it cannot be done because intelligence does not reside in the brain.

If a child is born handicapped in some way, medical science can find the reason for it. For example, they may find that it results from what is missing in the child's genes. However, one thing that science cannot explain is why any child should be born handicapped. Is it God who determines it?

Science cannot trace the cause of such an occurrence; it can only provide some answer about the effect. This is like a child seeing Mr. A in the prison cell. The child asks one adult why Mr. A is in prison. The adult answers that Mr. A is in prison because the police put him there. He does not explain what crime Mr. A. committed that should cause him to be in prison.

Buddhism can explain clearly that a certain child has to be born handicapped because he committed a certain misdeed in a previous lifetime. Other children are not inflicted with the problem because they did not commit that particular misdeed in their previous lifetime.

6.8 Dhamma Is the Roadmap for Life in the Round of Rebirth

The Dhamma can be easily and precisely described as the roadmap for life in the round of rebirth. This roadmap was first discovered by the Lord Buddha.

If we were to compare the round of rebirth to a country that is made up of civilized zones and barbaric zones, we can say that the barbaric zones lie to the south of the country whereas the civilized zones lie to the north.

These zones are different in that the further south one goes the more dangerous the territory becomes. It is full of landmines and all forms of terrorism. Whoever chances upon the territory must meet with all forms of suffering.

Likewise, the further north one goes, the more civilized the territory becomes. As one moves northward, one finds increasing levels of beauty, refinement, and comfort. Whoever chances upon the territory will experience indescribable happiness.

The vehicle that takes a person to the civilized zones is called wholesome Kamma. This includes alms-giving, Precepts observation, meditation practice, etc. Wholesome Kamma results in merit and Perfections. The more one accumulates merit and Perfections, the faster and higher one can travel to the civilized zones of the north.

Unwholesome Kamma is the vehicle that takes a person to the barbaric zones of the south. Unwholesome Kamma results in demerit. The more one accumulates demerit, the faster and deeper one can travel to the barbaric zones of the south.

Some people go about their daily life leisurely and are under the influence of their different moods. These people will continue to travel within the said country endlessly. They experience a mixture of pain and pleasure but mostly pain, since the roads within each zone is full of potholes and they get hurt every time they are careless.

Most of the people in the world have no idea which road leads north and which road leads south. As a result, the majority gets lost and travels to the south. Moreover, the road leading north has many U-turns which can take them southward any time.

Whoever wishes to travel outside this country of Samsara or the round of rebirth must perform wholesome deeds to the best of his ability especially meditation practice. Meditation practice is the method of gaining the special vehicle that can take a person out of the country. This special vehicle comes in the form of “The Patamamagga Sphere” which results from the coming together of the Noble Eightfold Path when the mind is brought to a standstill.

Once the vehicle has been attained through meditation practice, a person needs a captain to control the vehicle and guides it out of the country. The captain of this sublime vehicle is the Internal Triple Gem which includes Phra Dhammakaya, etc. Phra Dhammakaya is attained by keeping our mind quiet and still in the middle of the Patamamagga Sphere. The quiet and still mind continues to enter the center within the center until it meets Phra Dhammakaya. This particular captain has been waiting for each of us since our first lifetime inside the round of rebirth.

Once we can attain Phra Dhammakaya, we can travel anywhere we like. When we are flying in the sky, our worldview will be very different from the worldview we have when we are on the ground. We can fly anywhere we like quickly and freely. We can go full throttle to the front, to the back, to the right, to the left in a limitless space and everything will be as we wish it to be.

When we are up in the sky we can see the topography of the land below us. We can see clearly which road leads to which province. We can see which part of the civilized north provides a comfortable lifestyle. We can also see what the different barbaric zones in the south look like. We can see the lifestyle of hell beings and what they look like. Overall, we can see how the entire country contains a confused network of roads and how living beings have been trapped inside the country for a very long time without ever knowing that there is a way out.

Once we are satiated with the view and our energy source in the form of Perfections has reached the fullest extent, we can choose to fly out of the country which is the round of rebirth and follow the Lord Buddha and the Arahats to Nibbana. However, if our Perfections have not yet reached the fullest extent we can leave the round of rebirth temporarily and from time to time but we must return in order to continue with our Perfections pursuit.



Assignments:

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

Chapter 7

The Sangha:

The Lord Buddha's Disciples

Chapter 7

The Sangha: The Lord Buddha's Disciples

The Sangha: The Lord Buddha's Disciples

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7.7 Governance of the Monastic Community

7.7.1 Meet Together Regularly

7.7.2 Attend Meetings and Perform Sangha Activities Together

7.7.3 Follow the Sikkhapada

7.7.4 Respect the Authority of the Monastic Community's Leader

7.7.5 Resist the Power of Craving

7.7.6 Care for the Monastic Abode at the Edge of the Forest

7.7.7 Welcome Righteous Monks

7.8 The Sangha's Important Days

Concepts

1. The Sangha or Buddhist monks are the Lord Buddha's disciples. Buddhist monks can be divided into two categories: Ariya monks and ordinary monks. Ariya monks include Sotapannas all the way to Arahats.
2. Ariya monks possess nine virtues. They practice according to the Middle Way. They work directly toward Nibbana. They practice righteousness. They deserve our respect and reverence. They deserve our warm welcome. They deserve alms from us. They should be paid homage to. And they are our richest merit-field.
3. Nowadays ordinary monks play an important role in safekeeping Buddhism because Ariya monks are scarce. Today's ordinary monks will be tomorrow's Ariya monks if they continue to pursue Perfections to the fullest extent.
4. There are two types of ordination in Buddhism. Ordaining as a novice monk or Pabbajja and ordaining as a monk or Upasampada. However, to ordain as a monk a man must first undertake Pabbajja before he can undertake Upasampada.

Pabbajja means taking the Triple Gem as one's refuge.

There are three main methods of Upasampada but the method currently in use is called Yatticatutathakammavaca. It means undertaking ordination with the approval of the Sangha.

The Lord Buddha has given the monastic community a clear instruction on how to screen a potential candidate so that quality men can be selected to help perpetuate Buddhism. The candidate must meet the requirements of gender, age, character, and conduct. A person ordaining as a novice monk must observe the Ten Precepts while a person ordaining as a monk must observe the 227 Precepts. Precepts allow a monk to achieve the most important goal which is the attainment of the Internal Triple Gem through meditation practice.

5. Aparihaniyadhamma is the Dhamma Principle used in governing the monastic community. This Dhamma Principle has been responsible for keeping the monastic community strong for more than 2,500 years.
6. The Sangha's important days include the Buddhist Holy Day, Magha Puja Day, Asalha Puja Day, Rains-Retreat Entry Day, Rains-Retreat Exit Day, Kathina-Offering Day, etc.

Objectives

1. To enable the student to learn about the Lord Buddha's disciples.
2. To enable the student to apply what he has learnt to his pursuit of Perfections, which brings about happiness and success.
3. To enable the student to explain why the Lord Buddha's enlightened knowledge is perfect.

Chapter 7

The Sangha: The Lord Buddha's Disciples

7.1 Who Are the Sangha?

In the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, the Lord Buddha said, “The Sangha are the Buddha’s disciples. They practice righteousness. They have upright conduct. They have right conduct. They have proper conduct. They are the four pairs of Ariya individuals. These eight individuals are the Buddha’s disciples. They deserve alms. They deserve a warm welcome. They are worthy of reverence. They should be paid homage to. They are the richest merit-field.”¹

This saying of the Lord Buddha attests to the fact that the Sangha are the Lord Buddha’s disciples and they consist of the four pairs of Ariya individuals or eight Ariya individuals.

The eight Ariya individuals are individuals who possess Magga-4 and Phala-4, and they include:

A Sotapanna individual

An individual working toward Sotapattiphala

A Sakadagami individual

An individual working toward Sakadagamiphala

An Anagami individual

An individual working toward Anagamiphala

An Arahāt

An individual working toward Arahātship²

A Sotapanna individual means a Sotapattiphala individual. An individual working toward Sotapattiphala means a Sotapattimagga individual... An Arahāt means an Arahattaphala individual and an individual working toward Arahātship means an Arahattamagga individual.

¹ *Suttantapiṭaka Dīgha-nikāya Mahāvagga. Māhāparinibbāna Sutta*. Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Press, vol. 10, no. 159, p. 104

² *Abhidhammapiṭaka Dhātu-Puggalapaññati-pakaraṇa*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 36, no. 150, p. 187-188

To summarize, the four pairs of Ariya individuals or the eight Ariya individuals include:

The First Pair:	A Sotapattimagga individual	A Sotapattiphala individual
The Second Pair:	A Sakadagamimagga individual	A Sakadagamiphala individual
The Third Pair:	An Anagamimagga individual	An Anagamiphala individual
The Fourth Pair:	An Arahattamagga individual	An Arahattaphala individual

Therefore, what the Lord Buddha means by the Sangha are the four pairs of Ariya individuals or the eight Ariya individuals. He does not mean ordinary monks. It was written in the Commentary, “The term “eight individuals” means the individuals who possess Magga-4. These individuals are called Ariya monks.”³

Some of the Ariya monks during the Lord Buddha’s time who are well-known to Buddhists include Phra Sariputra Thera, Phra Mahamoggallana Thera, Phra Mahakaccayana Thera, Phra Mahakassapa Thera, Phra Anuruddha Thera, Phra Ananda Thera, Phra Upalavana Theri, Phra Mahapajapadigotami Theri, and Phra Bhaddakapilani Theri, etc.

A lay person, who has attained Ariyahood such as Sotapanna, is considered an Ariya monk according to this interpretation. That is, he is an Ariya monk from within.

It is for the reason of distinguishing Ariya monks from ordinary monks that ordinary monks are called “Sammati Sangha”.

The word “Sammati” means convention, agreement, authorization, appointment.

Sammati Sangha means the Sangha or the monks who are accepted by the monastic community after having been selected for their attributes and after having undertaken Upasampada according to the Vinaya or Discipline. Sammati Sangha is the name used to call the monks who have not yet attained the Path and Fruit of Nibbana. Those who have are called Ariya Sangha.⁴

“Sangha” is a Pali word for Buddhist monks.⁵

The word “Sangha” can mean a single monk or a company of four or more monks. The word “Sangha” means “group” as stated in the Commentary.⁶

Words that are used to mean the Sangha include Phra, Bhikku, Phra Bhikku, Phra Bhikku-Sangha, Pabbajita, and Samana.”

³ *Papañcasudhanī Aṭṭhakathā-Majjhimanikāya Mūlapaṇṇāsa. Aṭṭhakathā-mahaassapura Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 36, no. 150, p. 187-188

⁴ Phradhammakittivong (Thongdee Suratecho). **Kam Wat** [Dictionary for Buddhist Studies], B.E. 2548, p. 1006

⁵ *Paramatthadīpanī Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Theragāthā Aṭṭhakathā-nāgī-theragāthā.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 50, p. 415

⁶ *Paramatthadīpanī Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Itivuttaka. Aṭṭhakathā-pasāda Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 45, p. 566-567

The word “Phra” comes from the Pali word “Vara” which means sublime, excellent, wondrous.⁷ Therefore, the word “Phra” means a sublime person, an excellent person, a wondrous person.

The word “Bhikku” comes from the verse, “Bhikku in Pali means seeing the danger of the round of rebirth.”⁸

The word “Bhikku” is derived from three different words: Bhaya + Ikkha + Ru. Bhaya means danger; that is, danger in the round of rebirth. Ikkha means seeing. Therefore, Bhikku means seeing danger in the round of rebirth or a person who sees danger in the round of rebirth.

The word “Phra” is usually used before Bhikku as in Phra Bhikku in order to honor a Bhikku as being a sublime person, an excellent person, a wondrous person. A female monk is called a Bhikkuni.

The word “Pabbajita” comes from “Pabbajito” in Pali which means entering Pabbaja. It means an ordained person.⁹ According to Rajapanditayasathan, Pabbajita means a person who ordains under Buddhism. A person ordained outside of Buddhism is called “Titthiya”.¹⁰

The word “Samana” comes from “Samano” in Pali which means vanquisher of demerit. “Samana” means Ariya monks as in “Samano is a Samana who has attained Enlightenment such as a Sotapanna, etc.”¹¹

The Lord Buddha said to the wandering mendicant Subhadda, “Behold Subhadda, the Noble Eightfold Path cannot be found in other teachings; neither can the first, the second, the third, and the fourth Samana. Subhadda, whatever teachings contain the Noble Eightfold Path, they will also contain the first, the second, the third, and the fourth Samana. Subhadda, the Noble Eightfold Path can be found in my teachings and so can the first, the second, the third, and the fourth Samana. Other religions are devoid of Samana knowledge. Subhadda, if these Bhikkus practice righteousness, the world will not be devoid of Arahats.”¹²

⁷ Phradhammakittivong (Thongdee Suratecho). **Kam Wat** [Dictionary for Buddhist Studies], B.E. 2548, p. 635

⁸ *Saddhammapajjotikā Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Mahāniddes Guhaṭṭhakasuttaniddes*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 65, p. 291

⁹ *Paramatthadīpanī Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Theragāthā Aṭṭhakathā-sugantha-theragāthā*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 50, p. 170

¹⁰ **The Royal Institute Dictionary Online**, B.E. 2525

¹¹ *Paramatthadīpanī Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Petavatthu*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 49, p. 374

Papañcasudhanī Aṭṭhakathā-Majjhimanikāya Mūlapaṇṇāsa. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 19, p. 200

Papañcasudhanī Aṭṭhakathā-Majjhimanikāya Mūlapaṇṇāsa. Aṭṭhakathā-cullasīhanād Sutta. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 18, p. 15

¹² *Suttantapiṭaka Dīgha-nikāya Mahāvagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 13, no. 138, p. 318

It was explained in the Commentary, “The first Samana is the Sotapanna. The second Samana is the Sakadagami. The Third Samana is the Anagami. The fourth Samana is the Arahāt.”¹³ Therefore, the word “Samana” means specifically the Ariya monks and such Ariya monks can only be found in Buddhism.

¹³ *Sumamgalavilāsinī Aṭṭhakathā-dīgha-nikāya Mahāvagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 13, p. 436

7.2 The Sangha-Virtues

According to the Lord Buddha, the Sangha-Virtues here mean the virtues possessed by Ariya monks. In the Vattthupama Sutta, the Lord Buddha said, “Supatipanno bhagavato savakasangho, ujupatipanno bhagavato savakasangho, nayapatipanno bhagavato savakasangho samicipatipanno bhagavato savakasangho, yadidan cattari purisayugani attha purisapuggala esa bhagavato savagasangho ahunayyo, pahunayyo, dakkhinayyo, anjalikaraniyo, anuttaran punnakkhettan lokassati...”¹⁴

This saying of the Lord Buddha tells us that the Sangha possess nine virtues.

1. **Supatipanno:** The Sangha practice correctly in that they are practicing according to the Middle Way as taught by the Lord Buddha. The Middle Way means not too lax or too tight.
2. **Ujupatipanno:** The Sangha practice accordingly in that they are working toward Nibbana. They do not stray from the path. However many lifetimes have passed by, they remain steadfast and continue to work toward Nibbana.
3. **Nayapatipanno:** The Sangha are practicing in such a way as to attain the Dhamma knowledge which will lead them out of the Three Spheres.
4. **Samicipatipanno:** The Sangha practice excellence because they are practicing solely for the purpose of attaining Nibbana and nothing else.
5. **Ahunayyo:** The Sangha are worthy of our reverence.
6. **Pahunayyo:** The Sangha deserve our warm welcome.
7. **Dakkhinayyo:** The Sangha are worthy of our alms.
8. **Anjalikaraniyo:** The Sangha should be paid homage to.
9. **Anuttaran punnakkhettan lokassa:** The Sangha are the most fertile merit field. The merit earned by giving to the Lord Buddha is less than that earned by giving to the Sangha. When alms are offered to the Lord Buddha, it is considered to be “Patipuggalikadana” and not “Sanghadana”. The Lord Buddha says, “I do not consider Patipuggalikadana better than Sanghadana. In fact, Sanghadana is king where merit-making activities are concerned. The Sangha is king where worshippers are concerned. The Sangha is the most fertile merit-field.”¹⁵

For the ninth virtue, our Lord Buddha emphasizes a group of monks and not any one particular monk, for Patipuggalikadana means alms offered to a particular individual whereas Sanghadana means alms offered to a group of monks.

¹⁴ *Vattathupama Sutta Suttantapiṭaka Majjhimanikāya Mūlapaṇṇāsa*. Siamrath Pali Language, vol. 12, no. 95, p. 67

¹⁵ *Paramatthadīpanī Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Vimānavatthu Aṭṭhakathā-daddallavimāna*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 48, p. 293

7.3 Are There Any Ariya Monks in the Present Time?

This question gets asked quite often but no clear answer has been given. In the Mahāparinibbana Sutta, the Lord Buddha said, “As long as Bhikkus practice righteousness, the world will not be devoid of Arahats.”¹⁶ Even then, it is difficult to state clearly if there are Arahats in the present time. The reason is it is difficult to know what righteous monk has attained what level of Dhamma. Moreover, righteous monks who have attained Higher Dhamma do not reveal it to anyone. During the Lord Buddha’s time, the Lord Buddha was the only one who could tell and confirm what monk had attained what level of Dhamma. Nonetheless, it can be observed that at the end of the Lord Kassapa Buddha’s religion and before Buddhism disappeared from the world altogether, there were Ariya monks still. This observation came from Phra Dabbamallaputra’s personal account where he said:

After the Lord Kassapa Buddha and the Arahats attained Complete Nibbana and Buddhism was about to disappear from the world, seven of my Bhikku friends and I realized how Buddhism would not last much longer. We thought, “Without Buddhism, how can we continue to live? Therefore, we should go now into a big forest and practice according to the Most Exalted One’s Teachings.” I came upon a large stone mountain in the forest and climbed up the ladder. Afterward, I pushed the ladder away and made it fall to the ground. One senior monk in our group warned us earlier, “The happening of the Lord Buddha is so terribly rare and the time of Buddhism is nearly up. All of you should practice the Dhamma for as long as Buddhism shall last.” This senior monk was an Arahāt. Another senior monk was an Anagāmi. The rest of us observed the Precepts immaculately and we were later reborn in the Celestial Realm.”¹⁷

We can see that although the Lord Kassapa Buddha’s religion was nearing its end, yet there were still monks who practiced righteousness until they became Arahats and Anagāmis. We are now living in the middle period of the Lord Gautama Buddha’s religion, and it will be another 2,500 years or so before Buddhism disappears altogether.¹⁸ Presently, Buddhism is still flourishing and there are about one million Buddhist monks worldwide. Therefore, it is highly likely that there are Ariya monks in the world right now. Khun Kru Mai Yai¹⁹ of the Inner Dreams Kindergarten told us that up in the mountains and in the forests along the borders of Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Burma, Tibet, Nepal, etc., there are a large number of accomplished monks. This is especially so in the “Jungjing Cave” of Cambodia or the Kwai Mountain in Laos. These monks have achieved the different level of Jhanas; therefore, they possess supernatural powers. They can reduce distance. They can disappear. They can become invisible. Many of

¹⁶ *Suttantapiṭaka Dīgha-nikāya Mahāvagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 13, no. 138, p. 318

¹⁷ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Apadāna*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 33, no. 129-139, p. 254-257

¹⁸ In the Buddhist Scripture, Buddhism of Gautama Buddha will last at least 5,000 years.

Aṭṭhakathā-vinayapiṭaka Mahāvibhaṅg Part I. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 1, p. 59

¹⁹ Khun Kru Mai Yai is Phrathepyanamahamuni (Luang Por Dhammajayo), the Abbot of Wat Phra Dhammakaya. He teaches the Dhamma in the Inner Dreams Kindergarten which airs worldwide via satellite.

these accomplished monks can survive without food. Some have lived for 200 years, 400 years or even longer.

Khun Kru Mai Yai told us that he once met a man who had at one point been a Buddhist monk and had undertaken Dhutanga for nine years. His name was “Ui”. He told Khun Kru Mai Yai that not long after the end of WWII, he and five other monks trekked from Thailand to Tibet. They started their Dhutanga by trekking to Burma toward the Indian border and across the Himalayas. They had to trek through the wilderness and the trek was so difficult that one by one the monks began to pass away until “Ui” was the only monk left. He finally made it to a lush forest and upon entering the forest he found a huge Bodhi Tree. At the base of the tree there was a very large hole. The cave-like hole was large enough to accommodate about fifty people. Inside it, several monks were sitting in meditation. One of them was the teaching monk. There were two Caucasian monks, two Indian monks, two Burmese monks, one Chinese monk, one Tibetan monk, and one Thai monk now that Ui had joined the group.

Ui was able to make it to the teaching monk because in one previous existence Ui had accumulated merit under him. Ui called him “Luang Por Proang Bodhi”. He was different from other monks in that he was a very big man. Ui was more than 170 centimeters in height but his head only came up to Luang Por Proang Bodhi’s navel. Luang Por Proang Bodhi’s physical form was well proportioned, however. His complexion appeared as soft and supple as that of an infant and it was pink in color. His face was full like an Indian man. He had arched eyebrows and the bridge of his nose was not overly prominent. He had a beautiful mouth. His skin was light. His earlobes extended down to the middle of his throat. He had no wrinkles. His back was straight. His neck was full and no Adam’s apple was evident. His hands were plump. The soles of his feet were long. His fingers and toes differed slightly in length. His ankles were completely smooth. His feet were not arched but full. His heels were round. In other words, he possessed certain characteristics of the Perfect Man.

He wore his robe in the manner of a monk undertaking Dhutanga. The robe had the color of tree bark. His alms-bowl was fashioned from a giant cashew nut. Ui measured it and found it to be 50 centimeters wide and 75 centimeters long. It was black and shiny. Luang Por Proang Bodhi had been around on earth since the cashew nut was that size. On one occasion, the Chinese monk asked Luang Por how old he was. Luang Por brought out a leather bag the size of a fist inside which contained grains of sand; each grain was the size of a sesame seed. The Chinese monk tried to count the grains of sand in order to find out how old Luang Por was but he could not count them all. Ui told Khun Kru Mai Yai that Luang Por Proang Bodhi had made a resolute wish to attain Nibbana during the time of the Lord Maitreya Buddha.

What is interesting is the fact that Luang Por Proang Bodhi and Luang Pu Wat Paknam taught the same meditation technique. Luang Por Proang Bodhi said, “It is not difficult to attain Nibbana but something easy has been made difficult by some. It is the reason that the monks do not know about this meditation technique. After the Lord Buddha attained Complete Nibbana, something easy has been made difficult and confusing. The meditation technique is not difficult because one needs only to keep one’s mind pure and neutral at the center of one’s body above the navel. One’s mind is not affected by pain or pleasure. The real thing resides at the center of one’s body. It resides right there. And it cannot be found anywhere else.”

Some students may wonder how it is possible for a person to live that long or how a person can be that tall. In terms of longevity, some people may be of the impression that no one lives longer than Phra Bakula Thera, since he lived to be 160 years old. In fact, it is known that one Chinese man lived to be 256 years old. His name was Lee Chun Yoong. He was born in 2220 B.E. and died in 2476 B.E. He was healthy and strong. His back was straight. His skin was firm. His eyesight was good. He still retained his hair and his original set of teeth, and he never looked older than fifty.²⁰ Moreover, the Lord Buddha says that whoever practices the Four Paths of Accomplishment earnestly, using it as a vehicle...he can, if he so wishes, live as long as an entire Kappa.”²¹ Here, practicing the Four Paths of Accomplishment means practicing them through elevated meditative attainments.

Some students may wonder how Luang Por Proang Bodhi could be taller than three meters. According to the Guinness Book of Records, as of B.E. 2549 there was a Ukrainian called Leonik Studnik who was 2.57 meters tall.²² It was written in the Tripitaka that our Lord Gautama Buddha was eight meters tall. In fact, other Lord Buddhas were very much taller. If the student visits museums of ancient weaponry, he can see that they are very large and cannot possibly be held in one hand. This attests to the fact that people in ancient times are much bigger than we are now. People of ancient times lived in a world that provided a much healthier environment for them and food was much more nutritious. Therefore, it is very possible that people during the time of our Lord Gautama Buddha were eight meters tall.

²⁰ Dungtrin. **Sia Dai Kon Tai Mai Dai Aun**, B.E. 2548, p. 131-132

²¹ *Suttantapiṭaka Dīgha-nikāya Mahāvagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 13, no. 94, p. 276

²² “A Ukrainian, the Tallest Man in the World (257 cm.),” **Thai Rath Newspaper Online**, B.E. 2549

7.4 The Importance of Ordinary Monks

It is a fact that the further away it is from the Lord Buddha's time, the lesser the number of Ariya monks will be. It is for this reason that the majority of monks nowadays are ordinary monks. Nonetheless, these monks play a very important role in perpetuating Buddhism. It can be said that Buddhism exists today because of ordinary monks and these ordinary monks have the best opportunity to become Ariya monks in the future. Householders have less opportunity, since they are burdened with too many worldly responsibilities. A large number of monks during the Lord Buddha's time started out as ordinary monks. They became Ariya monks after they had listened to the Lord Buddha's Dhamma lectures which enabled them to practice meditation until they could attain Ariyahood.

It is fitting that Buddhists should support the venerable monks without being concerned about whether they are Ariya monks or ordinary monks. When monks persist in their Dhamma practice, they will attain Ariyahood if not in this lifetime then in a future lifetime. The Lord Buddha says that alms offered to ordinary monks bear tremendous fruit, "In the future, there will be only Gotrabhu monks...alms given to these monks yield incalculable fruit..."²³ Gotrabhu monks are ordinary monks.

Some students may have heard or read negative news about the conduct of certain monks and such news tends to erode the faith of some Buddhists such that they are reluctant to support the monks as a whole. It must be pointed out here that the media practice these days tends to emphasize negative or bad news. Moreover, some news is not based on the truth. There is even a saying that reflects very clearly what the media is like nowadays, "Bad news gets printed for free but good news costs money to print". In surveying the first page of the Daily News printed on Sunday, May 24, 2552 B.E., it was found that it contained altogether eleven articles. Two of them were about politics. Two of them were about matters of general concern. The rest were articles about murder, suicide, unlawful deeds, etc. These articles are printed in big letters and accompanied by gruesome pictures.

Political news these days are all about back-biting, back-stabbing words. The printed words may or may not be true but they get printed daily. Some news is about the negative aspect of a movie star's personal life. Some victims of the media end up having their entire future ruined. Some people copy an act of violence printed in the news. It can be observed that when some beastly acts get printed, soon enough there will be reports of the same acts being repeated elsewhere.

²³ *Suttantapiṭaka Majjhimanikāya Uparipaṇṇāsa. Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 23, no. 713, p. 395

In general, the first page of all the newspapers contains about 60 to 80% bad news or negative articles. During the time that General Surayut Julanont was Prime Minister, he once made a remark to the media, "...The Media is part of society. If we look only at negative things without offering anything positive to society, society will suffer. He also mentioned how one senior citizen Dr. Pravet Vasi said that if it is about bad news, it gets printed but we have to pay in order to get good news printed. The people in the media need to take a good look at themselves and see how they can help our society..."²⁴

Currently in Thailand there are about 300,000 monks and novice monks. It is therefore not surprising that a few of them may have transgressed the Dhamma-Vinaya. There are good and bad people in this world; therefore, it is possible that a few bad people may have ordained as a monk or novice monk. During the Lord Buddha's time, there were quite a few monks that had to disrobe because they had committed a major offence. But then again there were also a large number of monks who practiced the Dhamma until they attained Ariyahood. Today, there are still a large number of monks who practice righteousness according to the Dhamma-Vinaya. On several occasions, monks numbering in the one hundred thousand have come together at Wat Phra Dhammakaya to chant and practice meditation together. And yet these events have never made it to the press so most people are left with the impression that righteous monks are rare.

It is the Buddhists' responsibility to help preserve Buddhism and support the monks and novice monks so that they can study the Dhamma-Vinaya to the best of their ability. Monks and novice monks who practice righteousness should be recognized as role models for new monks and new novice monks. Should one meet with a monk or novice monk that behaves improperly, one should see to it that the situation gets corrected by reporting the incident to the monastic governance or by giving the monk or novice monk relevant information. If the offence is not serious, he can always change his way and become a credit to Buddhism. However, such an offence should never be printed in the media because it can damage the reputation of monks as a whole. For the sake of our peace and happiness and that of other people now and in the future, it is important that we as Buddhists carry out the work of perpetuating Buddhism to the best of our ability.

²⁴ "Surayuth Emphasized Listening to Critics," **Manager Newspaper Online**, B.E. 2549

7.5 Ordaining as a Buddhist Monk

In the present, there are two types of ordination in Buddhism: Ordaining as a novice monk or “Pabbaja” and ordaining as a monk or a Bhikku “Upasampada”.

“Pabbaja” means being free from worries.²⁵ This is contrary to the life of a householder which can be compared to a narrow path and not conducive to the pursuit of Perfections for the purpose of attaining Nibbana. “Pabbaja” is used in the case of a novice monk.

“Upasampada” means attainment. “Upasampada” is used in the case of a Bhikku or a Bhikkuni.²⁶

At the start of Buddhism, every disciple is a Bhikku. There were no novice monks then. When the Lord Buddha took up the religious life, the word “Pabbaja” was used. Later on, the Lord Buddha permitted the ordination of novice monks and the word “Pabbaja” was used. He also used the word “Upasampada” for the ordination of Bhikkus or monks.

The first novice monk in Buddhism is called “Rahula”. The Lord Buddha allowed him to ordain as a novice monk when He went back to the city of Kapilavastu for the first time in order to teach His father and His relatives. At that time, Queen Bimba told Prince Rahula to ask for the treasure troves which appeared at the Lord Buddha’s birth.

Having heard the request, the Lord Buddha thought, “This child wants the treasure which belongs to his father. Material wealth does not last and its path is narrow. I will give him instead the seven kinds of Ariya wealth, which I have discovered under the Bodhi Tree. This child will become the owner of Lokuttara wealth.”²⁷ The Lord Buddha told Phra Sariputra Thera to ordain His son Rahula as a novice monk by using the Tisaragamana Method. This method has been used to ordain novice monks ever since.

7.5.1 Ordaining as a Novice Monk or Pabbaja

This is what the Lord Buddha says in regards to “Pabbaja”, “Behold monks, a monk should perform these things to a person undergoing “Pabbaja”. First, shave his head and beard. Have him wear the dyed robe across one shoulder. Have him bow low at the monks’ feet and sit on his heels with his palms pressed together in a Namaskar. Tell him to cite Saragamana.”²⁸

²⁵ *Sāraṭhapakathāsiniṭ Ṭṭhakathā-samyuttanikāya Mahavalavagga. Ṭṭhakathā-Paṭi-Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 31, p. 289

²⁶ Phradhammakittivong (Thongdee Suratecho). *Kam Wat* [Dictionary for Buddhist Studies], B.E. 2548

²⁷ *Dhammapadaṭṭhakāthā Ṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Gāthā-Dhammapada.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 40, p. 158

²⁸ *Vinayapiṭaka Mahāvagga.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 6, no. 118, p. 281

Wearing the dyed robe across one shoulder means wearing the inner garment and the robe of a novice monk.

Citing “Tisaranagamana” is the means of taking refuge in the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. The monk doing the ordaining cites it and the ordaining candidate repeats after the monk as follows:

Buddhan saranan gacchami: I take refuge in the Lord Buddha.

Dhamman saranan gacchami: I take refuge in the Dhamma.

Sanghan saranan gacchami: I take refuge in the Sangha.

Dutiyampi Buddhan saranan gacchami: For the second time, I take refuge in the Lord Buddha.

Dutiyampi Dhamman saranan gacchami: For the second time, I take refuge in the Dhamma.

Dutiyampi Sanghan saranan gacchami: For the second time, I take refuge in the Sangha.

Tatiyampi Buddhan saranan gacchami: For the third time, I take refuge in the Lord Buddha.

Tatiyampi Dhamman saranan gacchami: For the third time, I take refuge in the Dhamma.

Tatiyampi Sanghan saranan gacchami: For the third time, I take refuge in the Sangha.²⁹

The reason the request has to be cited thrice is that at times the ordination candidate may lose his mindfulness or say the words incorrectly; therefore, citing it once is not enough to show his commitment. Once the words have been cited three times, the person is considered to be a novice monk. Next, the novice monk must take up “Sikkhapada-10” or the ten disciplinary rules as follows:

1. Panatipata veramani means abstaining from killing.
2. Adinnadana veramani means abstaining from stealing.
3. Abrahmacariya veramani means abstaining from action that poses as enemy to chastity practice.
4. Musavada veramani means abstaining from lying.
5. Suramerayamajjapamadatthana veramani means abstaining from alcohol which is the basis of recklessness.
6. Vikalabhajana veramani means abstaining from eating in the afternoon and night.

²⁹ Ibid., 280-282

7. Naccagitavaditavisukadassana veramani means abstaining from dancing, singing, playing music, and watching shows.
8. Malagandhavilepanadharanamandanavibhusanatthana veramani means abstaining from applying flowers, scented items, and other beauty products on one's body.
9. Uccasayanamahāsāyana veramani means abstaining from sitting or sleeping on a thick and large mattress.
10. Jataruparajatapattiggaṇa veramani means abstaining from receiving gold and money.³⁰

The Pabbaja process was very simple during the Lord Buddha's time. Nowadays minor ceremonies are added in order to help the ordination candidate gain more merit as well as increasing the sacredness of the Pabbaja process. These ceremonies differ depending on local customs.

For example, at Wat Phra Dhammakaya the Pabbaja process involves a series of ceremonies as follows: Circumambulating the Upasatha Hall, paying homage to Sima³¹, paying homage to the Buddha Image, asking for forgiveness and receiving the triple robe set, requesting Pabbaja, followed by requesting Tisaranagamana and the Precepts. The final ceremony is that of receiving the alms-bowl. In the Upasampada process, additional ceremonies involve requesting Nissaya, requesting Upasampada, and receiving Anusasana.

7.5.2 Ordaining as a Buddhist Monk or Upasampada

There are three main methods of Upasampada: Ehibhikkhuupasampada, Tisaranagamanupasampada, and Natticatutathakammavaca.

1) Ehibhikkhuupasampada: This is the ordination method where the Lord Buddha is the Preceptor. The first personage to receive this ordination method is Phra Annakondanna. At the time when our Lord Buddha gave the first Dhamma lecture called Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta to the five ascetics that included Kondanna at the Deer Park in the city of Benares, Kondanna attained the fruit of Sotapanna. After his attainment, he told the Lord Buddha that he wished to ordain as a monk. The Lord Buddha said to him, "Come and be a Bhikku. The Dhamma, I have already uttered. You are to practice chastity in order to put an end to suffering."³²

With these few words, Kondanna became a Bhikku.

³⁰ *Vinayapiṭaka Mahāvagga*. Siamrath Pali Language, vol. 4, no. 120, p. 170

³¹ **Sima** means the consecrated area on which the Upasatha Hall is located.

³² *Vinayapiṭaka Mahāvagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 6, no. 18, p. 50

In the situation where the person requesting Upasampada has already attained Arahatsip such as Yasa, the Lord Buddha would not say the phrase “to put an end to suffering.” He would just say, “Come and be a Bhikku. The Dhamma, I have already uttered. You are to practice chastity.”³³

2) Tisaranagamanupasampada: This is the ordination method where the candidate requests Tisaranagamana. This ordination method was used when one of the Lord Buddha’s disciples was a Preceptor. This is the same method as Pabbaja but the candidate must observe the Bhikku’s Precepts. This ordination method came into being because every ordination candidate had at one time to be brought by the monks to be ordained by the Lord Buddha. This caused hardship for the candidate and the monks who came from faraway places. Therefore, the Lord Buddha allowed His disciple in the local area to perform the role of Preceptor so that local candidates could be ordained.³⁴

3) Natticatutathakammavaca: This is the ordination method performed by a group of monks. If ordination takes place out in the country where it is difficult to find monks, then a group of five monks is needed. The Preceptor is included in this number. If ordination takes place in the city where many monks are available, at least a group of ten monks is needed. The Preceptor is included in this number.

The reason for the five or ten monks is so that they can consider the candidate carefully to make sure that once ordained the new monk will not behave in such a way as to tarnish the reputation of Buddhism in any way. In the present, it is more convenient to screen the candidates during application submission.

Natticatutathakammavaca is the ordination method which has been used up until now. Tisaranagamanupasampada had been canceled by the Lord Buddha. The first person to ordain by Natticatutathakammavaca is the Brahmin called Radha. This method of ordination consists of three different steps as follows:

- 1) Ordaining as a novice monk or Pabbaja
- 2) Requesting Nissaya and Upasampada
- 3) Receiving Anusasana.

Requesting Nissaya is the process of asking the Preceptor to be the candidate’s refuge, guardian, and teacher.

Requesting Upasampada is the process of asking the group of monks to accept the candidate and elevate him to the status of Bhikku.

³³ Ibid., no. 28, p. 67

³⁴ Ibid., no. 34, p. 73

Anusasana means the words of advice given to the new Bhikkhu by the Preceptor right after the Upasampada process. Anusasana includes Nissaya-4, and Akaraniyakicca-4. They allow the new Bhikkhu to know what he can do as well as what is absolutely forbidden by the Dhamma-Vinaya.

Nissaya comes from the Commentary, “‘Nissayakaraniyo’ which means things that I should do or should uphold.”³⁵

Nissaya means the four main requisites of a Bhikkhu. They include going on an alms-round, wearing a discarded cloth, living under the tree, and drinking one’s own urine for medicine.

Akaraniyakicca means things that a Bhikkhu must never do; otherwise, his monkhood will be terminated. These include having sexual intercourse, stealing, killing a person, and boasting about the supernatural powers that one does not have.

There are many more details to Upasampada but they will not be presented here. The most important point of this method of ordination is that the ordination candidate must be approved by all the monks who take part in the ceremony. Should any monk disapprove of the candidate, the ordination cannot proceed.

7.5.3 The Proper Age for Undertaking Pabbaja and Upasampada

When Prince Rahula, the Lord Buddha’s son undertook Pabbaja, he was seven years old.³⁶ According to the Commentary, the youngest person that has undertaken Pabbaja is Phra Paduma Thera. He ordained when he was just five years old.³⁷ However, in the present environment the most suitable age for undertaking Pabbaja is between ten to nineteen years old. The reason is a ten-year old child should be able to take care of himself well enough.

Children that are younger than ten still need a lot of supervision and can pose quite a bit of burden for the teaching monks. However, children younger than ten who can already take care of himself can undertake Pabbaja. Younger children can be ordained if the Preceptor deems it suitable. It all depends on the jurisdiction of each Preceptor or the policy of each temple.

Men twenty years old or above can undertake Upasampada. This means that no one younger than twenty years old can undertake Upasampada. However, men that are of age may elect to undertake Pabbaja instead of Upasampada.

³⁵ *Samantapāsādikā Aṭṭhakathā-vinayapiṭaka Mahāvagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 6, p. 373

³⁶ *Papañcasudhanī Aṭṭhakathā-Majjhimanikāya Majjhimaṇṇāsa*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 20, p. 272

³⁷ *Visuddhahajhonvilāsini Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Apadāna Padumtherapadāna*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 71, p. 235

The age of a person is counted by subtracting his birth date from the current date. If it is not less than twenty then the person can undertake Upasampada. However, the Lord Buddha allows the inclusion of the months spent in the womb as well. He says, “The first Citta has already occurred in the mother’s womb. It means the first Vinnan has already appeared. The birth of a living being coincides with the occurrence of the Citta. Behold monks, I permit a man to undertake Upasampada when he is twenty years old including the months he spent in the womb.”³⁸ It means that a man can undertake Upasampada when he is 19 years and 3 months old because once he includes the nine months spent in the womb, he will be exactly twenty years old.

7.5.4 Individuals Who Are Forbidden to Ordain and Individuals Who Should not Ordain

1) Individuals Who Are Forbidden to Ordain

There are three types of individuals that are forbidden to ordain: A person that is impaired in regards to his gender or state of being; a person that has committed Anantariyakamma; and a person that has committed an offence against Buddhism. If a group of monks allows such a person to ordain without any prior knowledge of the situation, as soon as the truth is known, they must tell the person to disrobe. This rule applies to novice monks as well.

The first type of individuals who are forbidden to ordain: A person that is impaired in regards to his gender or state of being.

1. A gay person
2. A person having the genitalia of both genders
3. An animal

Animals are forbidden to ordain. There was one incident during the time of the Lord Buddha where a Naga had disguised himself as a man and undertook Upasampada. One day while he was sleeping, his body changed back into a Naga. This caused a great deal of fear and commotion among the monks. When the incident was known to the Lord Buddha, He decreed that animals are not allowed to undertake Upasampada, and for those that have already ordained, they must disrobe.”³⁹

It is for this reason that during the Upasampada Ceremony, the candidate is asked whether he is a human being as in “Manussosi”. It is also because of this incident that an ordination candidate is called a Naga.

³⁸ *Vinayapiṭaka Mahāvagga Part I*, Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 6, no. 141, p. 354-355

³⁹ *Vinayapiṭaka Mahāvagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 6, no. 127, p. 322-323

According to Theravada Buddhism, women cannot in the present days ordain as a Samaneri or a female novice monk, nor can they ordain as a Bhikkuni or a female monk. The Lord Buddha has decreed that the ordination of women must be performed in the presence of a group of Bhikkus and Bhikkunis. Since there have not been Bhikkunis in Theravada Buddhism for a very long time already, women cannot be ordained as a Samaneri or a Bhikkuni.

The second type of individuals who are forbidden to ordain: A person that has committed Anantariyakamma. Anantariyakamma includes: 1) Patricide, 2) Matricide, 3) Killing an Arahant, 4) Causing the Lord Buddha to sustain a bruise, and 5) Causing division among the Sangha or Sanghabheda.

The third type of individuals who are forbidden to ordain: A person that has committed an offence against Buddhism. These include:

1. A person that has committed “Parajika”. It means a person that committed a serious offence as a monk and has to disrobe as a result. Such a person can never be ordained again.
2. A person that harms a Bhikkuni.
3. A person that puts on the saffron robe without having ever been properly ordained.
4. A monk or novice monk that takes up the religious life under another religion. However, a person that used to ordain in a different religion can ordain as a Buddhist monk provided that he spends a probation period or Parivasa lasting four months before ordaining.

Generally, a monk performs Parivasa in order to correct his mistakes or reviews his Precepts. It is the practice which enables a monk to practice righteousness accordingly. But Parivasa in this case means preparing the body and mind by abandoning old practices in order to ordain and practice righteousness according to the Dhamma-Vinaya.

2) Individuals Who Should Not Undertake Upasampada

The Lord Buddha cites twenty reasons that an individual should not undertake Upasampada. These reasons can be divided into two categories. The first category has to do with an individual who does not have a Preceptor or there is a problem with the Preceptor. For example, the Preceptor may be gay, may have joined another religious faith, may have committed a serious offence against Buddhism, may have the genitalia of both sexes or may wear the saffron robe without ever having been ordained. The second category has to do with individuals who do not have their own requisites such as alms-bowl and robe. Any monk that goes against this decree is considered to have violated every monastic rule.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ *Vinayapiṭaka Mahāvagga Part I*, Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 6, no. 133, p. 335-336

When a person has a proper Preceptor and his own requisites, then he can undertake Upasampada.

3) Individuals Who Should Not Undertake Pabbaja

Since being a Bhikku requires that a person undertakes Pabbaja prior to undertaking Upasampada, it means that any person that should not undertake Pabbaja will not be able to undertake Upasampada. There are three categories of individuals that should not undertake Pabbaja: Individuals who have a prior commitment or individuals who have committed a crime; individuals who are physically handicapped; and individuals suffering from a serious illness or a serious infectious disease.

The first type of individuals who should not undertake Pabbaja: Individuals who have a prior commitment or individuals who have committed a crime. These include individuals whose parents do not allow them to ordain, individuals who are in debt, individuals who are slaves, government employees who have not received permission to ordain, criminals, individuals being issued a warrant for their arrest, etc.

The second type of individuals who should not undertake Pabbaja: Individuals who are physically handicapped. These include individuals who are missing certain body parts such as a hand, a foot, an ear, a finger, certain part of the nose or individuals who have torn ligaments, web fingers or individuals who suffer from goiter, blindness, deafness, lameness, a clubfoot, a humpback or individuals who hop on one foot or individuals who are too short, too old and decrepit, deformed, etc.

The third type of individuals who should not undertake Pabbaja: Individuals who suffer from a serious illness or a serious infectious disease. These include paralysis, leprosy, cancer, ringworm, seizure, bronchiectasis. These were considered serious diseases during the Lord Buddha's time and individuals suffering from any of these diseases should not ordain. However, in the present environment there are other more serious diseases such as AIDS. Therefore, individuals that have AIDS should not ordain.

The Lord Buddha decrees that any Preceptor, who allows such individuals to ordain, is considered to have violated every monastic rule.⁴¹ However, there is no evidence that the Lord Buddha wishes those who have already ordained to disrobe. In fact, in some parts of the Commentary, it says that if a group of monks approve and allow such individuals to ordain, the ordination is still in effect.⁴² It is, therefore, up to the jurisdiction of the monks in each temple to evaluate if such individuals, once ordained, can continue to remain in the monkhood. If the shortcomings are not too severe, perhaps they can remain. However, if their presence will tarnish the image of the Sangha as a whole then it is best that they disrobe.

⁴¹ Ibid., no. 135, p. 340

⁴² *Samantapāsādikā Aṭṭhakathā-vinayapiṭaka Mahāvagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 6, p. 350

We can see that Buddhism has detailed rules in regards to the screening and selecting of individuals that can be allowed to undertake Pabbaja and Upasampada. It means that the ordination candidate must meet the standard in terms of physical condition, character, and conduct. The ordination candidate has to have accumulated plenty of merit in his previous existences. If an individual ordains in order to penetrate the path of Nibbana, he can be depended upon by Buddhism. This is in contrast to individuals who ordain in order to depend on Buddhism. It can be observed that most of the individuals that undertake ordination during the Lord Buddha's time were people that had already met with success in the secular world. These included our Lord Buddha, the two Chief Disciples, the eighty Perfected Disciples, etc. Each personage possessed physical endowments, material wealth, and desirable attributes. Still, they abandoned all sensual pleasures in order to search for true and lasting happiness under the Most Exalted One's Dhamma-Vinaya.

7.5.5 The Monk's Precepts

The monk's Precepts are called "Apariyantaparisuddhisila" which means a great many or endless. However, the monk's Precepts can be divided into four main categories or Parisuddhisila-4 as follows:

1. **Patimokkhasamvarasila:** It means Sikkhapada-227.
2. **Indriyasamvarasila:** It means the restraint of one's eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. It means feeling neither pleasure nor pain in seeing a physical form, hearing a sound, smelling a thing, touching a thing, tasting a thing or recalling the different emotions.
3. **Ajivaparisuddhisila:** It means right livelihood. A monk must practice righteousness according to the Dhamma-Vinaya and lives on the four necessities as provided for by lay devotees. A monk must not earn a living in the same way that a householder does. A monk does not earn a living by means aimed at deceiving people. This can happen in a situation where someone enters the monkhood with the intention of using the robe to obtain what he needs rather than practicing righteousness.
4. **Paccayasannissitasila:** It means considering the four necessities before consuming them. These include robe, food, shelter, and medicine. A monk must consider the fact that he consumes these things in order to sustain himself so that he can have the strength to conveniently practice a monk's duties. He does not consume these necessities in order to satisfy his craving.

There are many more details to Parisuddhisila-4 but here only the details about Patimokkhasamvarasila will be presented.

Patimokkhasamvarasila can be divided into eight groups of Sikkhapada. These include Parajika-4, Sanghadisesa-13, Aniyata-2, Nisasaggiyapacittiya-30, Pacittiya-92, Patidesaniya-4, Sekhiyavatta-75, and Adhikaranasamatha-7. These eight groups of Sikkhapada make up Sikkhapada-227.

The term “Sikkhapada” comes from the words “Sikkha” which means studying, and “Pada” which means topic. Therefore, “Sikkhapada” means topic of study or each of the Precepts.

These Sikkhapada are arranged in the order of decreasing seriousness in terms of an offence. Parajika is the most serious offence while Sekhiyavatta is the least serious offence. However, Adhikaranasamatha has to do with how to settle a disciplinary case rather than the prescribing of a punishment as in the case of the rest of Sikkhapada. Adhikaranasamatha is not generally practiced except when a disciplinary case needs to be settled.

1. Parajika: It means a loser or an individual who is a loser where the path of an ordained monk is concerned. A monk who has committed a serious offence must no longer remain in the monkhood. He may still be wearing the saffron robe and his crime may not be known to the public but as far as the truth is concerned, he is no longer a monk. He is just a householder in a monk’s garb. A monk who has committed a serious offence must disrobe and he will never be allowed to ordain again for the rest of his life.

Transgression of the Sikkhapada is called Apatti and a monk who has committed a serious offence is said to have committed Parajikaapatti. In this case, the name of the Sikkhapada coincides with the name of the Apatti or transgression. However, in some Sikkhapada, for example, Sekhiyavatta, the names of the Sikkhapada and the corresponding Apatti are not the same. Here, the name for Apatti in the case of Sekhiyavatta is called “Every Rule”.

2. Sanghadisesa: It means that an offence committed against the Sikkhapada must be corrected by the Sangha. Sanghadisesa is second only to Parajika in its seriousness. The offender can still remain in the monkhood but he must correct his mistake.

A monk who has committed Sanghadisesa must correct his mistake by undertaking Parivasa. It means he has to stay separate from other monks in a place provided for the monk who has committed Sanghadisesaapatti. During Parivasa, the offending monk is to consider and review his mistake so that he can take care never to make such a mistake again. Once the offending monk has gone through the steps and served the Parivasa period, he is allowed to rejoin the rest of the monks.

Nowadays, a large number of monks choose to practice Parivasa for their own purification even though they have not committed Sanghadisesaapatti. Besides, the time of Parivasa is the time to increase Dhamma study and meditation practice. The reason is a monk practicing Parivasa will not be disturbed by other monks and he has the time he needs to be alone.

Other offences outside of Parajika and Sanghadisesa are corrected by confessing an offence to another monk or a group of monks.

3. **Aniyata:** It means uncertain. These Sikkhapada deal with deciding the level of punishment whether it should be Parajika, Sanghadisesa, or Pacittatiya. Aniyata can be compared to a court case where witnesses are put on stand to testify so that the jury can decide on the type of punishment to be leveled against the wrongdoer.
4. **Nissasaggiyapacittiya:** The word “Nissaggiya” means “giving up things” whereas the word “Pacittiya” means “the wrongdoing which causes one to lose one’s wholesomeness”. Therefore, Nissasaggiyapacittiya states that a Bhikku who has transgressed Sikkhapada is required to give up a relevant item such as the triple robe set, etc. Once the item has been given up, he can then right himself by confessing his transgression.
5. **Pacittiya:** This is the Sikkhapada which does not require a monk to give up an item and he can proceed directly to confessing an offence.
6. **Patidesaniya:** It means “the act of returning” as in “Sirs, I have committed Patidesaniya which is blameworthy and unsuitable; therefore, I am returning it.” This act of returning is one of the ways to confess an offence.
7. **Sekhiyavatta:** It means the conducts about which a monk must learn. This has to do with such admirable conducts as wearing the robe correctly, having a proper dining manner, giving Dhamma lectures, etc. Once a monk has made a mistake and is determined to correct it, he is considered free of the offence.
8. **Adhikaranasamadha:** It means the way to settle a case in a peaceful manner.

Examples of Sikkhapada Cited in the Patimokkha

The 227 Sikkhapada cited in the Patimokkha can be divided into eight categories. Here only the Sikkhapada in the categories of Parajika and Sanghadisesa will be presented. These examples of Sikkhapada will give the student an idea of what each Sikkhapada is about.

There are Four Sikkhapada in Parajika.

1. Any monk who has sexual intercourse even with a female animal is considered to have committed Parajikaapatti.
2. Any monk who has stolen an object worth five masakas and above is considered to have committed Parajikaapatti.
3. Any monk who intentionally kills a human being or convinces others of the virtue of death, hence, causing them to commit suicide is considered to have committed Parajikaapatti.
4. Any monk who boasts of supernatural powers, which he does not possess, is considered to have committed Parajikaapatti. However, during the Lord Buddha's time, there were monks who sincerely understood themselves to possess a certain level of supernatural powers when actually they possessed a much lower level of supernatural powers. In this case, they were not guilty of Parajikaapatti.

There are 13 Sikkhapada in Sanghadisesa.

1. Any monk who intentionally causes ejaculation to occur is considered to have committed Sanghadisesaapatti.
2. Any monk who touches a woman's body because he is sexually aroused is considered to have committed Sanghadisesaapatti.
3. Any monk who talks to a woman by way of suggesting sexual intercourse because he is sexually aroused is considered to have committed Sanghadisesaapatti.
4. Any monk who tells a woman to satisfy him sexually because he is sexually aroused is considered to have committed Sanghadisesaapatti.
5. Any monk who acts as a matchmaker for a man and woman so that they can become husband and wife or live together temporarily is considered to have committed Sanghadisesaapatti.
6. Any monk who builds his own kuti without following the monastic rules for building kuti is considered to have committed Sanghadisesaapatti.
7. Any monk who has a Vihara built for his own purpose without following the monastic rules for building Vihara is considered to have committed Sanghadisesaapatti.
8. Any monk who falsely accuses another monk of having committed Parajikaapatti is considered to have committed Sanghadisesaapatti.
9. Any monk who frames another monk for Parajikaapatti is considered to have committed Sanghadisesaapatti.

10. Any monk who tries to cause divisiveness among the monks and does not change his way even after having been formally warned thrice in the presence of other monks is considered to have committed Sanghadisesaapatti.
11. Any monk that supports the monk who tries to cause divisiveness among the monks and does not change his way even after having been formally warned thrice in the presence of other monks is considered to have committed Sanghadisesaapatti.
12. Any monk who is stubborn and does not change his way even after having been formally warned thrice in the presence of other monks is considered to have committed Sanghadisesaapatti.
13. Any monk who tries to curry favor with certain householders and does not change his way even after having been formally warned thrice in the presence of other monks is considered to have committed Sanghadisesaapatti.

The Vinaya or Discipline emphasizes the means to control and check a monk's conduct. A monk who transgresses the Vinaya is guilty as soon as he commits the offence. For example, a monk who has sexual intercourse with another person or an animal is no longer a monk as soon as he carries out the act whether his offence is known to others or not. This is different from secular law in that the accused receives punishment only after he is found guilty.

7.5.6 Nissaya-4, an Ordained Person's Requisites

The lifestyle of an ordained person as decreed by the Lord Buddha requires a small amount of investment but bears considerable fruits. An ordained person sustains life with Nissaya-4 or the four requisites which include obtaining food through going on an alms-round, wearing a discarded cloth, living under a tree, and taking one's urine as medicine. These four requisites are enough to perpetuate Buddhism.

An ordained person does not need to earn a living. He needs only an alms-bowl in order to trek everywhere to teach and spread Buddhism. At night, he can sleep on the ground under a tree. For clothing, he can look for a discarded cloth in a trash pile. This is enough to cover his body and keep him warm. Our Lord Buddha practices what He teaches by using the cloth that was used to cover the body of a dead slave called Punna. He shook out the insects and worms amounting to four liters and used it to make a robe for Himself.⁴³

Phra Anuruddha Thera was a prince before he ordained. He had lived a much pampered life and never knew the words "There's none." Yet, he did not mind making his robe out of a discarded cloth.⁴⁴ When he was ill, he treated his illness by drinking his own

⁴³ *Manorothpuranī Aṭṭhakathā-aṅguttaranikāya Catukanipāta*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 35, p. 93

⁴⁴ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Theraggāthā*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 53, no. 393, p. 155

urine. Modern medicine has now confirmed that one's own urine can cure many illnesses.⁴⁵

It is very obvious that it costs very little to be a Buddhist monk or a novice monk and yet every monk who practices righteousness according to the Dhamma-Vinaya is capable of perpetuating Buddhism. Therefore, Buddhist monks are like a cactus plant that can survive on parched ground while other plants cannot.

It can be noted that our Lord Buddha and many of His disciples had given up great material wealth in order to take up the ordained life. They were willing to obtain the four requisites themselves as practiced by righteous monks instead of using what they had as a householder. They chose to sustain themselves by the food offered by lay devotees. And it is this tradition that has helped perpetuate Buddhism. It is because lay people have faith in the monks' righteousness that causes them to offer food to the monks. Faith is considered to be Ariya-wealth, for it never runs out. The more faith one has, the more it grows. Faith is more sublime than all the material wealth of a Universal Monarch. Such material wealth may be replenishable but it is useful only to its owner during his lifetime on earth. If the people of the next generation do not possess enough merit to use such material wealth, it will disappear.

However, once faith is cultivated, it can be passed on to future generations. Anyone that does not possess Wrong View can develop faith and faith is the factor that has nurtured and will continue to nurture Buddhism for a long, long time to come, long after the Lord Buddha and the Arahats have attained Nibbana.

Nissaya-4 can be used in screening ordination candidates, for anyone that cannot practice according to these principles will not be able to live within the monastic community and will eventually have to leave. Individuals that are attached to material gain and do not practice contentment can hardly be part of the monastic community. For the majority of Buddhist monks, the goal of ordination is to penetrate the Path of Nibbana. These are the monks that help perpetuate Buddhism and preserve Buddhist customs and traditions.

The Lord Buddha teaches Nissaya-4 in order to encourage monks to practice contentment in the way they consume the four requisites. Buddhist monks during the beginning of Buddhism sustained themselves by practicing Nissaya-4. It was only some time later that lay devotees asked the Lord Buddha for permission to offer robes to the monks, request the monks to dine in their house, to build a temple, to build dormitories for the monks, to offer medicine to the monks, etc. The physician Jivaka Komarabhacca was the first lay devotee to ask the Lord Buddha for permission to offer robes to the monks so that they did not have to seek a discarded cloth in order to turn it into a robe. The wealthy man Raja was the first lay devotee to ask the Lord Buddha for permission to build a dormitory for the monks. The great female lay devotee Mrs. Visakha was the first person

⁴⁵ "An Alternative Medicine: Urine Therapy," **Manager Online**, B.E. 2548

to ask the Lord Buddha for permission to offer meals to the monks on special occasions such as offering meals to visiting monks, etc.

However, the Lord Buddha still praises the virtue of contentment, “Behold monks, I allow you to accept robes from a lay devotee. Those of you who would rather use a discarded cloth can continue to do so. However, I still praise the virtue of being happy with whatever you have.”⁴⁶

7.5.7 The Fruits of Ordination

The Lord Buddha teaches about the fruits of ordination in the Samannaphala Sutta. Details of this Sutta are presented in the course book “SB 304 Monastic Lifestyle”. Here only a summary will be presented. There are three levels to the fruits of ordination: the basic level, the intermediate level, and the high level.

1. The Fruits of Ordination at the Basic Level

- 1) Ordination elevates an ordained person’s status. A slave or a manual laborer once ordained as a Buddhist monk will be paid homage to by people from every social class. Even a king must pay homage to a Buddhist monk.
- 2) A Buddhist monk is respected, admired, worshipped, paid homage to and offered the four requisites. A farmer who used to work and pay tax will no longer need to pay tax once he undertakes ordination but will be offered the four requisites by the masses including the ruler of the country.

2. The Fruits of Ordination at the Intermediate Level

These are the fruits derived from meditation practice. When a Buddhist monk observes the Precepts immaculately and practices meditation regularly, he will be able to attain the First Jhana, the Second Jhana, the Third Jhana, and the Fourth Jhana. The happiness derived from such meditative attainments is far superior to secular happiness.

3. The Fruits of Ordination at the High Level

The fruits of ordination at the high level involve the attainment of the Internal Triple Gem, the attainment of the Eight Kinds of Super-knowledge or Vijja-8 which is the source of supernatural powers. These include Vipassananana or the insight employed in practicing Vipassana, Manomayiddhi or the supernormal power of the mind, Iddhividhi or psychic powers, Dibbasota or clairaudience, Dibbacakkhu or clairvoyance, Cetopariyanana or telepathy, Pubbenivasanusatinana or the ability to recall one’s previous lives, and Asavakkhayanana or the complete removal of defilements.

⁴⁶ *Vinayapiṭaka Mahāvagga Part II*, Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 7, no. 135, p. 262

7.6 The Pursuit of Perfections for the Attainment of Ariyahood

Three points will be made here: The steps of self-training as prescribed in the Ganakamoggalana Sutta; the inter-relatedness between Sikkhattaya or the Threefold Training and the Ganakamoggalana Sutta; and the pursuit of Perfections of certain Ariya monks in their previous existences.

7.6.1 The Six Steps of Self-Training for a Buddhist Monk

As mentioned in chapter 5, the pursuit of Perfections has to do with the kind of self-training a person undertakes in order to rid him of all bad habits. At the same time, he endeavors to accumulate merit regularly in order to gradually remove all three families of defilements which include greed, anger, and ignorance from his mind. These wholesome acts give rise to merit and Perfections.

The Lord Buddha teaches the steps of self-training for a monk in the Ganakamoggalana Sutta. This Sutta originated with a question from the Brahmin called Ganakamoggalana. The question was, “In Buddhism, are there steps involved in education or self-training in the same way that there are in the secular world?” The Lord Buddha answered in the affirmative and said that there are six steps of self-training for a Buddhist monk.

1. Exercise restraint in the Patimokkha.
2. Guard the sense-faculties.
3. Exercise moderation when eating.
4. Practice wakefulness regularly.
5. Possess mindfulness and self-possession.
6. Stay in a quiet place.

Steps 1 to 3 involve Parisuddhisila-4 as explained in 7.5.5.

Step 1: Exercise Restraint in the Patimokkha

This step involves Patimokkhasamvarasila or the 227 Precepts.

Step 2: Guard the Sense-Faculties

This step involves Indriyasamvara. It means guarding the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. It means feeling neither pain nor pleasure when seeing a physical form, hearing a sound, smelling a thing, touching a thing, or recalling an emotion.

Step 3: Exercise Moderation When Eating

This step involves Paccayasannisasitāsila. It means considering the four requisites before consuming them. The four requisites include robe, alms-bowl, shelter, and medicine. A monk must consider the fact that he consumes these requisites in order to sustain himself so that he will have enough energy to perform a monk's duty. He does not eat in order to satiate his craving.

Steps 4 to 6 involve meditation practice and have the following details:

Step 4: Practice Wakefulness Regularly

Once a monk knows how to practice the first three steps, the Lord Buddha teaches him to practice wakefulness regularly. It means to cleanse the mind of "Avaraniyadhamma" by doing walking and sitting meditation all day long as well as during the first watch of the night (6:00 – 10:00 p.m.). The Lord Buddha tells the monks to sit in a half-lotus position and be fully mindful when they get up to lie down on their right side throughout the second watch (10:00 p.m. – 2:00 a.m.), and to do walking and sitting meditation again all throughout the third watch (2:00 a.m. – 6:00 a.m.).⁴⁷

Practicing wakefulness regularly means not being too fond of sleep. The Lord Buddha wishes every monk to manage his time in such a way that he can spend a lot of time practicing meditation. He does not want them to waste their time. He does not want them to fall under the influence of defilements by being sleepy, etc. He teaches the monks to schedule time for meditation practice at the following four intervals:

1. During the day (06.00 – 18.00 hours), a monk is to endeavor to cleanse his mind by doing walking and sitting meditation.
2. During the first watch (18.00 – 22.00 hours), a monk is to endeavor to cleanse his mind by doing walking and sitting meditation.
3. During the second watch (22.00 – 02.00 hours), a monk is to rest by lying on his right side with the left foot resting on the right foot. One foot can be below the other. A monk is to maintain his mindfulness and be ready to get up to continue with his meditation practice later on.

According to the office for health promotion, lying on one's right side is the healthiest posture during sleep because the body is not pressing on the heart. Therefore, this posture allows the heart to beat normally, and food from the stomach can be transferred to the small intestine effectively. This posture can also help with back pain.⁴⁸

4. During the third watch (02.00 – 06.00 hours), a monk is to endeavor to cleanse his mind by doing walking and sitting meditation once again.

⁴⁷ *Suttantapiṭaka Majjhimanikāya Uparipaṇṇāsa*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 22, no. 97, p. 145

⁴⁸ "How to Sleep Well and Safe?," *Thai Rath Newspaper Online*, B.E. 2549

The Lord Buddha has clearly scheduled time for meditation practice and it is up to each monk to exercise extreme endeavor in order to overcome the power of defilements. A monk is not to waste his time but to spend it practicing meditation so that his mind is always bright and clear.

Step 5: Possess Mindfulness and Self-Possession

Once a monk has achieved wakefulness, the Lord Buddha teaches him to maintain mindfulness and self-possession when he walks forward and steps backward, when he looks at something or when he looks around, when he folds and extends his arm, when he puts on his robe, when he carries his alms-bowl, when he eats, drinks, chews and tastes his food, when he has a bowel movement, when he urinates, when he walks, stands, sits, sleeps, wakes up, when he speaks and when he is quiet.⁴⁹

Mindfulness means keeping something in mind. Self-possession means consciousness or being conscious when doing something. Mindfulness occurs before one thinks, say, or do something while self-possession occurs while one is thinking, saying, or doing something. However, both these virtues always occur together.

In terms of meditation practice, mindfulness and self-possession mean “contemplating the Dhamma”. In step 4, a monk has achieved wakefulness by doing walking and sitting meditation. Therefore, in step 5, a monk must develop mindfulness and self-possession by contemplating the inner experience he has gained during meditation practice. In this way, he does not only maintain the Dhamma he has gained but also causes the Dhamma which he has gained to progress further.

Step 6: Stay in a Quiet Place

Once a monk has gained mindfulness and self-possession, the Lord Buddha teaches him to live in a quiet place as in a forest, under a tree, up on a mountain, in a gorge, in a cave, in a graveyard, in the woods, in open space, near a hay pile... After his alms-round, he is to sit in a half-lotus position, maintaining mindfulness... Abandon Nivarana-5 or the five hindrances that cause the mind to be gloomy and wisdom to decrease. When the mind is no longer distracted by sense-desire and unwholesomeness, it can attain the First Jhana...the Second Jhana...the Third Jhana...and the Fourth Jhana.⁵⁰

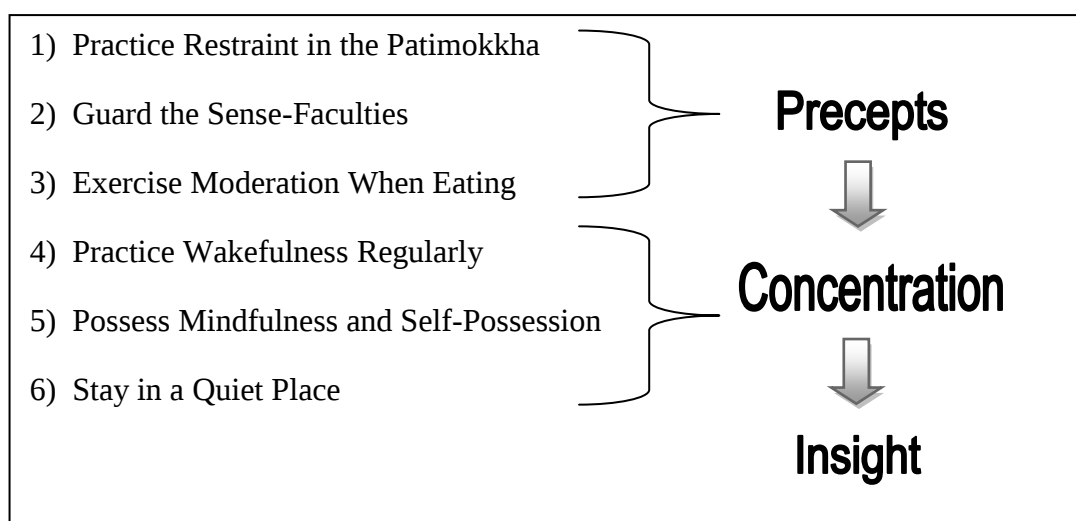
This step is different from step 4. From time to time, a monk should leave the temple, which is filled with other monks as well as novice monks, not to mention lay devotees that come to the temple to make merit, to go and stay in a quiet place. This will allow him the solitude necessary to practice meditation continuously so that his meditation can progress quickly. He can better cleanse the mind of defilements so that Arahatsip can be attained.

⁴⁹ *Suttantapiṭaka Majjhimanikāya Uparipaṇṇāsa*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 22, no. 98, p. 145

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 99-100, p. 146

7.6.2 The Relationship between the Threefold Training and the Ganakamoggallana Sutta

Actually, the steps for a monk's self-training as described in the Ganakamoggallana Sutta are the same as the Threefold Training or the Noble Eightfold Path. However, the Sutta provides more details on the subject; thereby, making it is easier to follow. The diagram shown below demonstrates how these six steps are related to the Threefold Training.



Steps 1, 2, and 3 are related to Precepts in the Threefold Training because these steps have to do with keeping the Precepts. Steps 4, 5, and 6 are related to Concentration in the Threefold Training because they have to do with meditation practice. And finally, Insight is gained through meditation practice.

Steps in a monk's self-training will be given in more details in the course SB 303 Blueprint for Buddhist Training. This course describes the relationship between the steps for a monk's self-training in the Ganakamoggallana Sutta and the methods for self-training in the Dhammanna Sutta.

7.6.3 The Ariya Monks' Pursuit of Perfections

What determines if an ordinary monk, who has followed the six steps of self-training, will be able to attain the different stages of Ariyahood is the merit and Perfections that he has accumulated throughout his previous lives. If an ordinary monk does not possess sufficient merit and Perfections, it will not be possible for him to attain any stage of Ariyahood. At most, he may be able to become a Gotrabhu monk through the attainment of Gotrabhu Dhammakaya. This stage is close to the Path and Fruit of Sotapanna.

The time it takes to pursue Perfections for the purpose of attaining Ariyahood is far less than that required for Buddhahood. If a person wishes to become a Chief Disciple like Phra Sariputra Thera or Phra Moggallana Thera, he must continue to pursue Perfections until he can receive the Buddha-Forecast from one of the Lord Buddhas he meets along the way. After the first Buddha-Forecast, it will take him one Asankheyya Kappas and an additional 100,000 Kappas before he can become one of the Lord Buddhas' Chief Disciples sometime in the future. A monk who wishes to be recognized as the most excellent in any particular area takes less time to pursue Perfections before his wish can be fulfilled. Male and female lay devotees who wish to attain Ariyahood must also pursue Perfections in the same way that a monk does except that they pursue Perfections as a lay supporter of Buddhism.

The following table demonstrates the different lengths of time it takes to attain the different sacred statuses:

No.	Status	The Pursuit of Perfections after the First Buddha-Forecast	The First Buddha-Forecast Was Given by
1.	Pannadhika Buddha The Lord Gautama Buddha The 25 th Buddha in the Family of 25 Buddhas	Four Asankheyya Kappas and 100,000 Kappas	The Lord Dipankara Buddha, the first Buddha in the family of 25 Buddhas.
2.	Paccekabuddha Phra Devadat, King Ajatasattu Mr. Sumana Malakam, etc.	Two Asankheyya Kappas and 100,000 Kappas	Phra Devadat and Mr. Sumana Malakam need to pursue Perfections for another 100,000 Kappas
3.	Chief Disciple Phra Sariputra Thera Phra Moggallana Thera	One Asankheyya Kappas and 100,000 Kappas	The Lord Anomadassi Buddha the 7 th Buddha in the family of 25 Buddhas
4.	Most Excellent Disciple Phra Ananda Thera Phra Mahakassapa Thera, etc.	100,000 Kappas	The Lord Padumutara Buddha the 10 th Buddha in the family of 25 Buddhas
5.	Most Excellent Upasakas-Upasikas Anathapindika, Visakha	100,000 Kappas	The Lord Padumutara Buddha

This table shows clearly the different lengths of time required to attain the different sacred statuses. Buddhahood requires the longest time. In a way, it is like the different lengths of time it takes to get a Bachelor's Degree, a Master Degree, and a Doctorate Degree.

It should be noted that whether one aspires to Buddhahood, Paccekabuddhahood, Chief Discipleship, or the position of being the most excellent monk, the most excellent Upasaka or Upasika, a Buddha-Forecast is needed. Our Lord Gautama Buddha gave Mr. Sumana Malakarn the Buddha-Forecast that he would attain Paccekabuddhahood 100,000 Kappas hence and his name would be Sumanisasara.⁵¹ It was written in the Commentary that it would take Phra Devadat another 100,000 Kappas to attain Paccekabuddhahood and his name would be Atthisasara.⁵² Our Lord Gautama Buddha's two Chief Disciples received their first Buddha-Forecast from the Lord Anomadassi Buddha while the venerable monks, Upasakas, and Upasikas that were recognized as being the most excellent in their particular area received their first Buddha-Forecast from the Lord Padumutara Buddha.

The Tripitaka or the Commentary said nothing about how the Chief Disciples and other venerable monks pursued Perfections prior to receiving the first Buddha-Forecast. But if their history is anything like that of a great Bodhisatta who aspires to Buddhahood, we can surmise that they had had to aspire to their respective lofty status and pursued Perfections accordingly prior to receiving the first Buddha-Forecast.

In the existence that Phra Sariputra Thera received the first Buddha-Forecast, he had ordained as a Yogi by the name of "Suruci". His meditative attainments allowed him to travel through the air. And he had altogether 24,000 followers who were Yogis and could also travel through the air. The Yogi Suruci worshiped the Lord Anomadassi Buddha with eight flowers as well as praising the Buddha-Virtues. The Lord Anomadassi Buddha gave the Yogi the Buddha-Forecast, "An infinite number of Kappas hence, there will happen a Buddha called "Gautama", this Yogi will be one His disciples. He will be a Chief Disciple and his name will be "Sariputra".⁵³ The term "an infinite number of Kappas hence" comes from the Pali "Aparimeyyo ito kappe"⁵⁴ which according to the Commentary means one Asankheyya Kappas.⁵⁵

It is interesting to note that during the Lord Anomadassi Buddha's time all of Yogi Suruci's followers were able to attain Arahathship after having listened to the Lord Anomadassi Buddha's Dhamma lecture.⁵⁶ It was because Yogi Suruci aspired to Chief Discipleship that he had to continue pursuing Perfections until such time that his lofty aspiration could be realized. It can also be implied that a person who can be the master of such individuals as those able to attain Arahathship must necessarily possess a greater amount of merit and Perfections himself. This means that Yogi Suruci had to have pursued Perfections for a great number of lifetimes before he received the first Buddha-Forecast.

⁵¹ *Paramatthajotika Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Suttanipāṭa*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 47, p. 153

⁵² *Dhammapadaṭṭhakāthā Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Gāthā-Dhammapada*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 40, p. 199

⁵³ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Apadāna*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 70, no. 3, p. 399-425

⁵⁴ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Apadāna*. Siamrath Pali Language, vol. 32, no. 3, p. 33

⁵⁵ *Visuddhahajhonvilāsini Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Apadāna*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 70, p. 463

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 430

In other words, he had to have possessed enough merit and Perfections for the Lord Anomadassi Buddha to give him the Buddha-Forecast.

The reason Phra Sariputra Thera did not say anything about his pursuit of Perfections prior to receiving the first Buddha-Forecast was that as a Chief Disciple, he could only recall his previous lives for one Asankheyya Kappas.⁵⁷ It means that the very first existence in his past-life recollection was the one that he received the first Buddha-Forecast. This supernormal ability applies to every venerable monk who is recognized as being the most excellent in his particular area but in their case they can recall their past lives for 100,000 Kappas.⁵⁸ It is for this reason that every one of the Lord Gautama Buddha's most excellent disciples talked about their pursuit of Perfections beginning with the existence that they received the first Buddha-Forecast which was 100,000 Kappas ago.

Other Arahats could not go back as far and each Arahata was different depending on the way that they had pursued Perfections. One thing every Arahata had in common is the fact that they could extinguish all of their defilements. This can be compared to college graduates who receive the same degree but are different in that among other things they do not possess the same amount of knowledge and talents.

7.7 Governance of the Monastic Community

The monastic community refers to all the Buddhist monks in each temple, in each center, etc., all the way to each country and the entire world.

Governance of the monastic community refers to the governance of each temple, each center, etc., all the way to each country and the entire world.

The Lord Buddha governs the monastic community by employing principles outlined in the Dhamma-Vinaya such as Aparihaniyadhamma. Aparihaniyadhamma means the Dhamma which prevents regression but causes progression alone. Aparihaniyadhamma has the same meaning as the word "culture" in secular language.

Culture means things that cause a community to prosper, the way of life of a community, the conduct, the things created by the community for the use of the entire community, the sharing of knowledge among the community members.⁵⁹

Aparihaniyadhamma has been the culture of the monastic community since the Lord Buddha's time. It is the monk's way of life. It is the Dhamma principles which cause the monastic community to prosper for over 2,500 years.

⁵⁷ *Aṭṭhakathā-vinayapiṭaka Verañjakaḍḍavaṇṇa Paṭṭhasamantapasādikapla*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 1, p. 289

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ The Royal Institute Dictionary Online, B.E. 2525

The Lord Buddha teaches about **Aparihaniyadhamma-7** in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta as follows:

Monks, meet together often. If you do this always, then you can hope for progression alone, for there will be no regression.

Monks, start the meeting together and finish the meeting together. Perform a monk's duty together. If you do this always, then you can hope for progression alone, for there will be no regression.

Monks, do not add to what the Tathagata has already decreed. Do not negate what the Tathagata has already decreed. Practice all of the Sikkhapada decreed by the Tathagata. If you do this always, then you can hope for progression alone, for there will be no regression.

Monks, treat the senior monks who are knowledgeable and who have spent many years in the monkhood with due respect. They are the father and the leader of the Sangha. Heed their advice. If you do this always, then you can hope for progression alone, for there will be no regression.

Monks, do not give in to the power of craving which leads to rebirth. If you do this always, then you can hope for progression alone, for there will be no regression.

Monks, take the time to stay close to the forest. If you do this always, then you can hope for progression alone, for there will be no regression.

Monks, think about what to do in order to invite your fellow monks who are not here to come here and for those who are already here to live here comfortably. If you do this always, then you can hope for progression alone, for there will be no regression.⁶⁰

7.7.1 Meet Together Often

The Lord Buddha says, Monks, meet together often. If you do this always, then you can hope for progression alone, for there will be no regression.

To meet together often means “coming together for a specific purpose, coming together to discuss a matter”.⁶¹ A meeting does not only mean sitting together to plan something but also mean coming together to perform an activity.

⁶⁰ *Suttantapiṭaka Dīgha-nikāya Mahāvagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 13, no. 70, p. 240-241

⁶¹ *The Royal Institute Dictionary Online*, B.E. 2525, p. 503

The Lord Buddha emphasizes the importance of meetings and many of the monk's daily activities require the monks to meet together frequently. They meet together to decree Sikkhapada. They meet together to listen to the chanting of Patimokkha bi-weekly. They meet together to decide on a pending case. They meet together to listen to the Lord Buddha's Dhamma lecture. They meet together to assign certain monks to take on a certain responsibility. They meet together to perform a ceremony for different occasions such as the Rains-Entry Day, the Rains-Exit Day, Pavarana, Kathina, etc.

There are many reasons why the Lord Buddha places such emphasis on the monks' meeting.

1. The Lord Buddha wishes every monk to play a part in the governance of the monastic community. This communal activity engenders love for the community. In this way once the Lord Buddha and all the Arahats have attained Complete Nibbana, later generation monks will be able to perpetuate the teachings.
2. Meetings allow everyone to see the whole picture, and to understand the purpose of a project so that every monk can work together in the same direction for the good of Buddhism.
3. Meetings build harmony and unity among the monks. Meetings allow the monks to see each other, to get acquainted with each other, to understand each other, and to live together in peace and happiness.
4. Before the Lord Buddha attained Nibbana, He said that the Dhamma-Vinaya, which He has taught and decreed, would take His place. The Lord Buddha wishes the monks to govern the monastic community according to the Dhamma-Vinaya. The Dhamma-Vinaya can be compared to the constitution of the monastic community. Therefore, when the monastic community wishes to do something, when a problem arises or when something needs to be decided, the monks must come together in order to consider the Dhamma-Vinaya and decide the way forward accordingly.

7.7.2 Meet Together and Work Together

The Lord Buddha says, Monks, start the meeting together and finish the meeting together. Perform a monk's duty together. If you do this always, then you can hope for progression alone, for there will be no regression.

People in the world today understand the importance of teamwork. Many books have been written on the subject. It is now understood that when people of the same organization work separately and in different directions it is not a situation that can make the organization strong. On the contrary, it can cause conflicts. In time, weakness and conflicts can cause an organization to fail. It is also recognized that no one person is complete in himself in terms of talents and abilities. Each person has his own limitations and particular talents and abilities. Therefore, individuals of different weaknesses and strengths can complement each other. This understanding gives rise to the concept of teamwork.

A person who is perfect in every respect is extremely rare and at most only five such personages can happen during a Kappa. Such a personage is the Lord Buddha. And yet, the Lord Buddha emphasizes the importance of teamwork because team members are relied upon to help propagate Buddhism.

Each time that the Lord Buddha greets a monk after the Rains-Retreat is over, He often says, “Are you living together in harmony? Have there been any conflicts? Did you live together happily during the Rains-Retreat? Did you have any problem going on your alms-round?”⁶²

The Lord Buddha decrees that all the monks attend all communal activities together. For example, they must listen to the chanting of Patimokkha together. Moreover, monks of the same temple must never hold activities separate from each other. The Lord Buddha says, “Monks who chant the Patimokkha separate from the rest of the monks in the temple are said to have transgressed every monastic rule.” If a monk cannot attend the Patimokkha chanting due to such unavoidable circumstances as an illness, he must inform a fellow monk that he has kept the Precepts immaculately throughout the past two weeks. In other communal activities, the monk who cannot attend must authorize another monk to represent him and to agree with whatever the monastic community decides to do.

In the monastic community, voting must always be unanimous in order for something to take effect. For example, during Upasampada, should one out of the group of five or ten monks disagree about the ordination candidate, the ordination cannot take place. During the Lord Buddha’s time, there was a division among the monks in the city of Kosambi. However, they were later united. The Lord Buddha called for them to perform a very sacred ceremony called, “Sanghasamaggi”. For this ceremony, every monk must attend. There can be no exception. The Lord Buddha says, “For Sanghasamaggi, every monk including those who are sick must attend. Authorization is not allowed.”⁶³

In performing a communal activity, every monk must be present from start to finish. If a monk should leave in between the activity, the activity is considered null and void. And the activity must be performed all over again. The harmony and unity of the monks is what makes the monastic community strong.

⁶² *Vinayapiṭaka Mahāvibhaṅg Part I*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 2, no. 228, p. 450

⁶³ *Vinayapiṭaka Mahāvagga Part II*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 7, no. 258, p. 490

7.7.3 Not Subtracting or Adding Anything but to Follow Sikkhapada

The Lord Buddha says, Monks, do not add to what the Tathagata has already decreed. Do not negate what the Tathagata has already decreed. Practice all of the Sikkhapada that the Tathagata has decreed. If you do this always, then you can hope for progression alone, for there will be no regression.

To decree means to form a new rule.⁶⁴ Here it means decreeing Sikkhapada or each of the Precepts that a monk must observe.

Samadana means undertaking.⁶⁵

“Do not add to what the Tathagata has already decreed” means no Buddhist monks should ever add more Sikkhapada to those already decreed by the Lord Buddha.

“Do not negate what the Tathagata has already decreed” means no Buddhist monks should ever subtract from the Sikkhapada that has already been decreed by the Lord Buddha.

“Practice all of the Sikkhapada decreed by the Tathagata” means earnestly practicing every part of the Sikkhapada which has been decreed by the Lord Buddha.

Every part of the Sikkhapada as applied to Bhikkus and Bhikkunis has all been decreed by the Lord Buddha. Sikkhapada did not result from the efforts of the monastic community but each part of the Sikkhapada had been decreed by the Lord Buddha following certain incidents. After each new part of the Sikkhapada had been decreed, Bhikkus and Bhikkunis (male and female monks) would be summoned so that they could be informed of it. And they were to learn it and practice it accordingly.

The decreeing of Sikkhapada occurred as follows:

When a monk or a Bhikku had done something inappropriate, the Lord Buddha would call a meeting of all the monks. He would investigate the situation and should the monk be found to have done something inappropriate, the Lord Buddha would explain to him and to every monk why the action was inappropriate and what harm could be wrought by it. As a result, a new rule would then be decreed to make sure that the inappropriate act would not be repeated elsewhere within the monastic community. The Lord Buddha also fixed a penalty to be imposed upon any monk who transgressed the rule later on. The monk who acted inappropriately would not receive any punishment because the rule had not yet been decreed at the time of the incident. The Lord Buddha did not want the rule to be retroactive.

In so far as the Dhamma is concerned, every topic has been taught by the Lord Buddha. And it is His disciples who do the work of explaining each particular topic to other monks or to the lay people.

⁶⁴ The Royal Institute Dictionary Online, B.E. 2525

⁶⁵ Ibid.

It is the fact that every monastic rule has been decreed by the Lord Buddha that makes Sikkhapada different from the rule of law in the secular world. The rule of law results from the meeting of lawyers, house representatives, senators, etc. It does not result from any one person.

One may ask why each monastic rule must be decreed by the Lord Buddha alone or why He does not allow a Bhikku or a Bhikkuni to add to what has already been decreed. It is a fair question when we consider how in the current environment it is widely accepted that working as a team is much more effective than working alone, and that a group decision is a safer bet than a decision made by any one person. These questions can be answered by the following example:

There was a situation during the Lord Buddha's time. It had to do with a religious sect called Jainism. What happened was the sect leader had died and after his death, his followers became divided. It was Phra Ananda Thera who told the Lord Buddha about this situation. He said, "The leader of Jainism died and there is now a division among his followers... This happens because the leader of Jainism did not do a good job decreeing the sect's Dhamma-Vinaya. It is not the Dhamma-Vinaya decreed by the Lord Buddha... The Lord Buddha was in agreement with Phra Ananda Thera's comment..."⁶⁶

Any part of the Dhamma-Vinaya, which is not decreed by the Lord Buddha, is necessarily flawed because the person doing the decreeing does not possess perfect knowledge. Moreover, he is not the Buddha. In the case of Jainism, when its followers practice what has been taught, it does not lead them out of suffering; nor does it lead them to Inner Truth. Therefore, each follower practices the teachings his own way and there is no possible way that two followers can achieve the same results. It is not surprising then that division should occur because each follower thinks himself correct. On the contrary, the Lord Buddha's Dhamma-Vinaya is perfect because the Lord Buddha possesses perfect knowledge. When His disciples practice according to His teachings, ultimately they will be able to attain what He has attained.

It is for these reasons that every part of the Sikkhapada is sacred and the Dhamma-Vinaya is like the Sangha's constitution. Minor rules can of course be set up by the monastic community to fit the time and circumstances. However, these minor rules must never violate the Dhamma-Vinaya in the same way that a new law should never violate the constitution. It is also important to clearly separate minor rules from the Dhamma-Vinaya so that the Dhamma-Vinaya can be kept intact.

⁶⁶ *Suttantapiṭaka Dīgha-nikāya Sīlakhandhavagga. Pāsāḍika Sutta*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 15, no. 95, p. 261

The unanimous acceptance of the Dhamma-Vinaya by the monastic community plays an important role in creating unity within the monastic community throughout Buddhism's long history. If the Lord Buddha has allowed the monks to add to the Dhamma-Vinaya, monks of later generations who still possess defilements may add something that should not be added, thereby, making the entire Dhamma-Vinaya unacceptable by certain groups of monks. This is a sure way to cause division in the monastic community. It is for the reason that no one except for the Lord Buddha can decree the Dhamma-Vinaya that the Dhamma-Vinaya can remain pure and sacred more than 2,500 years later.

The lack of Dhamma-Vinaya will cause the monastic community to be without the necessary rules to abide in. This will cause Buddhism to regress quickly like a pile of flowers which have not been arranged into a garland, they scatter everywhere when the wind blows.

As a matter of fact, the Lord Buddha does allow certain minor rules in the Dhamma-Vinaya to be nullified when circumstances change. However, all five hundred Arahats, who came together to settle questions of doctrine and to fix the text of the Scriptures for the first time, could not agree on which rule should be considered minor. Therefore, Phra Mahakassapa Thera, who chaired the Council, proposed that the Dhamma-Vinaya be kept as such in its entirety. And the rest of the Arahats agreed. This is how the Dhamma-Vinaya has stayed intact up until the present time.

Each time that the Council is held, its purpose is to preserve the original Dhamma-Vinaya, since it is already perfect. It does not require improvement in the same way that modern days research does. Secular knowledge is imperfect because it is derived from Sutamayapanna (understanding acquired by learning) and Cintamayapanna (understanding acquired by reasoning). It is not the perfect knowledge that is derived from Bhavanamayapanna (understanding acquired through Self-Enlightenment).

The Lord Buddha tells the monks to practice all of the Sikkhapada decreed by the Tathagatha. It is useless if all that the monks do is to memorize every part of the Sikkhapada but neglect to practice them. They will not be able to attain the Path and Fruit of Nibbana in the same way that a cow-herder does not get to taste the milk from the cows in his herd.

Social law is written up by lawmakers. All of whom possess defilements and imperfect knowledge. Therefore, it is important for lawmakers to meet and discuss together from time to time in order to make amendments or add to existing law or to change it altogether. It is understandable why law and the constitution are not sacred and cannot last a long time. They change with time and circumstances, unlike the Dhamma-Vinaya which has lasted longer than 2,500 years.

7.7.4 Respect the Authority of the Monastic Community's Leader

The Lord Buddha says, Monks, treat the senior monks who are knowledgeable and who have spent many years in the monkhood with due respect. They are the father and the leader of the Sangha. Heed their advice. If you do this always, then you can hope for progression alone, for there will be no regression.

The Lord Buddha wishes the monks to have respect for the monastic community's leader. Soon after the Lord Buddha attained Complete Nibbana, the monastic community's leader at the time was Phra Mahakassapa Thera. He was the leader of about 700,000 monks who assembled together on the day that the Holy Relics were divided.”⁶⁷ He was the most senior monk because he had been in the monkhood longer than the rest of the monks there.⁶⁸ Moreover, it was Phra Mahakassapa Thera who chaired the first Council.

The Lord Buddha wishes all the monks to respect the monastic community's leader because He wishes them to listen to his advice and at the same time this practice helps the monastic community to stay intact. Sometime after Phra Mahakassapa Thera chaired the first Council which was attended by five hundred Arahats, Phra Purana and his five hundred monks disagreed with Phra Mahakassapa Thera's decision during the Council. He showed no respect for the senior monk. Neither did he accept the work of the Council.

This incident was the spark that caused the monastic community to be divided into Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism later on. If at the time Phra Purana followed the Lord Buddha's teaching about having due respect for the monastic community's leader, there might not have been all these different schools in Buddhism today. This very unfortunate event took place in spite of the Lord Buddha's teaching on the subject. Had he said nothing about this subject, things would have been a lot worse.

The Lord Buddha also teaches the monks to defer to those who have spent a longer time in the monkhood regardless of the senior monk's age. It is the less senior monk's duty to listen to the more senior monk's advice and guidance when it comes to life in the monkhood. A person might have been in a high position before he was ordained but once he enters the monkhood, he must pay respect to a more senior monk. He must be willing to practice according to the Dhamma-Vinaya if he wishes to grow in the monkhood.

In terms of work, the Lord Buddha wishes the monks to respect each other based on each monk's talents and abilities. For example, whoever excels in a particular area should head up the work in that area. It is for this reason that the Lord Buddha had given recognition to each monk who was the most excellent in his particular area. The rule also applies to Chief Discipleship. For example, Phra Sariputra Thera spent a shorter time in the monkhood than other senior monks, and yet the Lord Buddha appointed him the Chief Disciple on the right. Phra Sariputra Thera received this loftiest position because he was

⁶⁷ *Sumamgalavilāsinī Aṭṭhakathā-dīgha-nikāya Sīlakhandhavagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 11, p. 70

⁶⁸ Phradhammapititaka (Payut Payutto). *Dictionary of Buddhism Online*, B.E. 2549

the most excellent in the area of wisdom and because he had spent countless lifetimes pursuing Perfections.

7.7.5 Resist the Power of Craving

The Lord Buddha says, Monks, do not give in to the power of craving because it leads to rebirth. If you do this always, then you can hope for progression alone, for there will be no regression.

This teaching is part of the Sikkhattaya. It is meant to remind the monks to keep their body and word under control so that they do not cause problems for themselves and the monastic community. Resisting the power of craving allows the monks to live together in peace and harmony, the circumstance which is conducive to their meditation progress. When a monk observes the Precepts immaculately, his mind can achieve concentration easily and this helps him to attain the different stages of Enlightenment.

7.7.6 Care for the Monastic Abode at the Forest's Edge

The Lord Buddha says, Monks, care for the monastic abode at the forest's edge. If you do this always, then you can hope for progression alone, for there will be no regression.

Care for the monastic abode at the forest's edge means being concerned about meditation practice, since the forest's edge is a place of solitude and it helps one's mind to be quiet and still. The forest can be considered a place of victory for Buddhist monks. After all, our Lord Buddha was born, attained Enlightenment and Complete Nibbana in the forest.

7.7.7 Welcome Righteous Monks

The Lord Buddha says, Monks, think about what to do in order to invite your fellow monks who are not here to come here and for those who are already here to live here comfortably. If you do this always, then you can hope for progression alone, for there will be no regression.

This part of Aparihaniyadhamma emphasizes the importance of hospitality. It teaches the host monk to welcome a righteous monk who comes to his temple. When the righteous monk has been warmly welcome, he may wish to stay for a long while. This gives the host monk the opportunity to listen to the visiting monk's Dhamma lectures and other valuable suggestions that will help him to grow in the monkhood. Moreover, when every monk in the monastic community behaves in this way, it fosters

harmony and unity within the monastic community which can only help Buddhism to continue to be strong for a long, long time to come.

On the contrary, if hospitality is not shown, the visiting monk may not feel like staying at all left alone for any length of time. This prevents the host monk from benefiting from the righteous monk's Dhamma lectures and advice. He will not have the opportunity to learn more about the Dhamma-Vinaya and his knowledge will not increase. Moreover, if every monk in the monastic community behaves this way, Buddhism cannot survive. And should harm be wrought upon it by external forces, Buddhism will not be able to fend for itself.

7.8 The Sangha's Important Days

Such days include Buddhist Holy Day, Magha Puja Day, Asalha Puja Day, Rains-Entry Day, Rains-Exit Day, Kathina-Offering Day, etc. The significance of these days will be briefly described as follows:

7.8.1 Buddhist Holy Day

It is the day where Buddhists come together at the temple to listen to Dhamma lectures. There are four Buddhist Holy Days in a month. These fall on the 8th day of the waxing moon, the 15th day of the waxing moon, the 8th day of the waning moon, and the 14th or 15th day of the waning moon depending on the month.

On the 15th day of the waxing and the 14th or 15th day of the waning moon, it is the day where the monks meet to review Sikkhapada-227. This is the same thing as listening to the chanting of Patimokkha. Generally the chanting is carried out by a representative group of monks while the rest of the monks listen to the chanting together. On such occasion, each monk takes the opportunity to review his Precepts so that he can make the necessary correction should he find that he has transgressed a certain Precept.

The day before the Buddhist Holy Day is called “Shaving Day”. It is the day that monks shave their heads in preparation for the Patimokkha chanting the next day.

On Buddhist Holy Day, Buddhists usually go to the temple to make merit and listen to Dhamma lectures. It is a day where Buddhists take a day off work in to order to carry out Buddhist activities.

7.8.2 Magha Puja Day

Magha Puja means paying homage to the Lord Buddha on the full-moon day of the Magha month. It is one of the important days in Buddhism. Magha means the third month.

Magha Puja Day is the day to recall the four events which took place during the Lord Buddha's time.

- 1) It was the day that 1,250 Arahats came together at Veluvana Temple.
- 2) These Arahats had been ordained by the Lord Buddha.
- 3) These Arahats came together without any prior arrangements.
- 4) The day of the meeting was the full-moon day of the Magha month.

It is for these reasons that Magha Puja Day is also called Caturangasannipata Day because it was the day that the above four events took place.

On Magha Puja Day, Buddhists usually go to make merit at the temple. These merit-making activities include worshipping the Lord Buddha by lighting the lanterns, contemplating the Arahats who came together to see the Lord Buddha on that day, etc.

7.8.3 Asalha Puja Day

Asalha Puja Day means paying homage to the Triple Gem on the full-moon day of the Asalha month. The Asalha month is the eighth month. It is one of the important days in Buddhism. Asalha Puja Day serves to remind Buddhists of the three important events that took place during the Lord Buddha's time.

- 1) It was the day that the Lord Buddha gave His first Dhamma lecture which is called "Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta".
- 2) It was the time that the Sangha first appeared. During the first Dhamma lecture, Phra Annakondanna attained the Fruit of Sotapanna and subsequently requested the Lord Buddha to ordain him.
- 3) Phra Annakondanna's ordination signified the completion of the Triple Gem.

7.8.4 Rains-Entry Day

During the Rains-Retreat which lasts for three months, every Buddhist monk must follow the Dhamma-Vinaya by remaining in one place for the entire Rains-Retreat. A monk prepares for the Rains-Retreat by making a resolve which is called "Adhitthanavasa"

There are two periods for the Rains-Retreat: The first period is from the first day of the 8th waning moon to the 15th day of the 11th waxing moon. This is called "Purimavasa". If a monk cannot enter the Rains-Retreat during this first period, he can choose the last period which is from the first day of the 9th waning moon to the 15th day of the 12th waxing moon. This is called "Pacchimavasa". The majority of the monks prefer to enter the Rains-Retreat during Purimavasa.

There are two Rains-Entry days. The Rains-Entry Day for Purimavasa is on the first day of the 8th waning moon whereas the Rains-Entry Day for Pacchimavasa is on the first day of the 9th waning moon.

7.8.5 Rains-Exit Day

The Rains-Exit Day is the day that the Rains-Retreat ends. No resolve needs to be made in the same way as on the Rains-Entry Day.

There are two Rains-Exit days. For Purimavasa, it is on the 15th day of the 11th waxing moon. For Pacchimavasa, it is on the 15th day of the 12th waxing moon, the same day as “Loi Kratong Day”.

On the Rains-Exit Day, the monks, who have spent the entire Rains-Retreat together in the same place, must perform “Pavarana” before going their separate ways. “Pavarana” is the monastic ceremony held at the end of the Rains-Retreat in which monks invite one another to speak of any offence or unbecoming behavior they have seen, heard or suspected to have been committed during the Rains-Retreat. Therefore, Rains-Exit Day is also called Pavarana Day.

7.8.6 Kathina-Offering Day

Kathina is the word used to call a special cloth which the Lord Buddha permits the monks who have observed the Rains-Retreat to wear.

Kathina means an embroidery frame which is used to hold pieces of cloths so that they can be stitched together to make a robe. During the Lord Buddha’s time the monks had to help each other with the stitching of robes. Such a robe is called a “Kathina Cloth”.

Kathina-offering is a ceremony where a Kathina cloth is offered to the monks who have spent the entire Rains-Retreat in one place.

There is a timeframe in which a Kathina cloth can be offered. The Kathina-Offering period lasts only one month from the first day of the 11th waning moon to the 15th day of the 12th waxing moon.

A temple can schedule its Kathina-Offering to fall on any day within this specified period.



Assignments:

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

Chapter 8

Upasaka and Upasika: Lay Devotees Who Sit Near the Triple Gem

Chapter 8

Upasaka and Upasika: Lay Devotees Who Sit Near the Triple Gem

Upasaka and Upasika: Lay devotees who sit near the Triple Gem

8.1 Who Are Upasaka and Upasika?

8.2 How to Be an Upasaka or an Upasika

8.2.1 The First Upasakas in Buddhism

8.2.2 The First Upasikas in Buddhism

8.2.3 How to Be an Upasaka or an Upasika in the Present Days

8.3 Upasaka and Upasika's Virtues

8.4 The Importance of Upasaka and Upasika

8.4.1 They Provide the Four Requisites for the Monks and Novice Monks.

8.4.2 They Support the Work of the Buddhist Faith

8.5 Upasakas and Upasikas during the Lord Buddha's Time

8.5.1 Overview of the Upasakas and Upasikas during the Lord Buddha's Time

8.5.2 Important Upasakas and Upasikas during the Lord Buddha's Time

8.6 The Pursuit of Perfections for the Attainment of Ariyahood

Concepts

1. Upasaka is a male householder who takes refuge in the Triple Gem whereas Upasika is a female householder who take refuge in the Triple Gem.
2. One can become an Upasaka or an Upasika by requesting the Triple Gem to be their refuge in front of the Lord Buddha, the Sangha, or the Buddha Image.
3. The first Upasakas were merchants and their names were Tapussa and Bhallika. The first Upasikas were Mrs. Sujada and Phra Yasa Thera's former wife.
4. Upasaka and Upasika possess the following virtues. They have faith in the Lord Buddha. They observe the Precepts. They do not subscribe to trendy charm or talisman. They believe in Kamma and not in charm or talisman. They do not seek any teachings outside of Buddhism. And they support the work of the Buddhist Faith.
5. Upasaka and Upasika are important because they provide the four requisites for the monks and novice monks and they support the work of the Buddhist Faith.
6. Upasakas and Upasikas during the Lord Buddha's time came from different castes. Some were kings. Some were Brahmins. Some were from the Vaisya caste and others were from the Sudda caste. These people might belong to different castes but as lay devotees, they had equal opportunity in accumulating merit and pursuing Perfections.
7. The Three Ways of Making Merit serve as the guideline for Upasaka and Upasika in pursuing Perfections for the attainment of Ariyahood. These include alms-giving, Precepts observation, and meditation practice.

Objectives

1. To enable the student to gain knowledge about Upasaka and Upasika.
2. To enable the student to emulate the way Upasakas and Upasikas pursued Perfections in the past.

Chapter 8

Upasaka and Upasika: Lay Devotees Who Sit near the Triple Gem

8.1 Who Are Upasaka and Upasika?

On one occasion, while the Lord Buddha was staying at Nigrodharam near the city of Kapilavastu in the kingdom of Sakka, a Sakya prince called Mahanama came to see the Lord Buddha. He asked the Lord Buddha what qualifies a person as an Upasaka. The Lord Buddha answered, Behold Mahanama, when a person takes refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, he is called an Upasaka.¹

Upasaka is said to sit near the Triple Gem² because he is a firm believer of Buddhism.³

Therefore, Upasaka is a male householder who takes refuge in the Triple Gem, sits near the Triple Gem, and is a firm believer of Buddhism.

Upasika is a woman who takes refuge in the Triple Gem.⁴ Upasika is a female householder who takes refuge in the Triple Gem, sits near the Triple Gem, and is a firm believer of Buddhism.

In other words, Upasaka and Upasika are practicing Buddhists. Non-practicing Buddhists, who believe in for example, ghosts, are not considered to be Upasaka and Upasika.

¹ *Suttantapiṭaka Aṅguttaranikāya Atthakanipāta. Mahānāma Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 37, no. 115, p. 440-442

² *Sumamgalavilāsinī Aṭṭhakathā-dīgha-nikāya Sīlakhandhavagga.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 11, p. 490

³ The Royal Institute Dictionary Online, B.E. 2525

⁴ *Dutiyasamantapasadikaplar Aṭṭhakathā-vinayapiṭaka.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 3, no. 634, p. 667

8.2 How to Be an Upasaka or an Upasika

To be an Upasaka or an Upasika, one needs only to say that he or she takes refuge in the Triple Gem. However, whether one is a good Upasaka or a good Upasika depends on how well he or she practices the virtues of Upasaka and Upasika. The first Upasakas in Buddhism were the merchant brothers called Tapussa and Bhallika. The first Upasikas in Buddhism were Mrs. Sujada and Phra Yasa Thera's former wife.

8.2.1 The First Upasakas in Buddhism

Soon after attaining Self-Enlightenment, our Lord Buddha went to sit immersed in the bliss of emancipation under the Ceylon iron wood tree. The two merchant brothers, Tapussa and Bhallika arrived at the locality from the countryside of Ukakala. On that occasion, a celestial being, who used to be the brothers' relative in a previous existence, said to them, "Behold men, the Lord Buddha has just happened and He is now sitting under the Ceylon iron wood tree, you should go and worship Him with Sattu powder and Sattu lumps.⁵ Your deed of merit will bless you with success and happiness for a long, long time to come."

The two merchant brothers with the Sattu powder and Sattu lumps in their hands subsequently went to see the Lord Buddha. They said to Him, "May the Most Exalted One take the Sattu powder and Sattu lumps from us for our success and happiness for a long, long time to come."

At the time, the Lord Buddha was thinking, "No Buddhas accept an offering with their hands. How can I receive the Sattu powder and Sattu lumps from these men, I wonder?"

The four great kings, who rule the celestial realm of Catumaharajika, came simultaneously from the four cardinal points, each carrying a stone alms-bowl and said to the Lord Buddha, "May the Most Exalted One receive the alms-bowl from me." And it was with the new stone alms-bowl that the Lord Buddha accepted the offering of Sattu powder and Sattu lumps from the two men before eating them.

Afterward, the two merchant brothers said to the Lord Buddha, "The two of us wish to take refuge in the Lord Buddha and the Dhamma. May the Most Exalted One remember the two of us as Upasaka who are willing to give up their lives for the Lord Buddha and the Dhamma from this day onward."

The reason the two merchant brothers did not take refuge in the Sangha was that the Lord Buddha had no disciples just yet; therefore, the Sangha had not yet happened. However, the Internal Sangha or Sangharatana that are the refined Dhammakaya Bodies had already occurred on the day of our Lord Buddha's Self-Enlightenment.

⁵ These are made from rice as provisions during one's travel.

8.2.2 The First Upasikas in Buddhism

After our Lord Buddha had started to teach the Dhamma until there were altogether six Arahats, there appeared the seventh Arahata in the personage of Phra Yasa. He was the son of Mrs. Sujada who had offered a very special dish of rice pudding to the Lord Buddha on the day of His Self-Enlightenment.⁶

One day, with Phra Yasa in attendance, the Lord Buddha went to Phra Yasa's former residence. On that day, the Lord Buddha gave a Dhamma lecture called "Anupubbikatha" to Mrs. Sujada and Phra Yasa's former wife. The Dhamma lecture was about the following subjects:

- 1) Danakatha: It is the teaching about alms-giving.
- 2) Silakatha: It is the teaching about Precepts observation
- 3) Saggakatha: It is the teaching about celestial wealth in the Celestial Realm which is the result of alms-giving and Precepts observation.
- 4) The harm, depravity, and gloominess of sense-desire
- 5) The fruits of abandoning sense-desire

Afterward, the Lord Buddha gave them a Dhamma lecture on the Four Noble Truths. The Lord Buddha taught that whatever comes into existence will also come to an end. As a result of these Teachings, both ladies were able to attain the Fruit of Sotapanna.

Having attained the Fruit of Sotapanna, Mrs. Sujada and Phra Yasa's former wife said to the Lord Buddha, "The Most Exalted One's words are indeed penetratingly clear. The Most Exalted One's words are indeed lovely. The way the Most Exalted One teaches the Dhamma is like a person who turns something up-side-down right-side-up, opens what is closed, gives directions to someone that has lost his way, shines a light in the darkness so that others can see.

The two of us wish to take refuge in the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. May we be remembered as Upasikas who are willing to give up their lives for the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha from this day onward.

Phra Yasa's mother and former wife were the first Upasikas that not only took refuge in the Triple Gem but also attained the Triple Gem through the attainment of the Fruit of Sotapanna.

⁶ *Manorothpurani Aṭṭhakathā-aṅguttaranikāya Ekanipāṭa*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 33, p. 83-86

8.2.3 How to Be an Upasaka or an Upasika in the Present Days

Nowadays, one becomes an Upasaka or an Upasika by proclaiming oneself a Buddhamamaka. The word “Buddhamamaka” means “a person who venerates the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha”.⁷ It can be seen that the words Upasaka, Upasika, and Buddhamamaka have the same meaning. There are steps involved in proclaiming oneself a Buddhamamaka.

- 1) Make one’s intention known to the monks at the temple. The monks will advise the person of a suitable date and time as well as some necessary items that a person needs to bring with him at the stated date and time.
- 2) On the day of the appointment, the person should show up at the ceremony dressed in white or in an appropriate uniform.
- 3) The person kneels in front of the altar, lights candles and incense sticks, and places flowers on the altar. With his mind on the Triple Gem, he cites:

“Imina sakkarena buddhan pujemi: I worship the Lord Buddha with these items (followed by Pancappatitthitenavandana)⁸.”

Imina sakkarena dhamman pujemi: I worship the Dhamma with these items (followed by Pancappatitthitenavandana).

Imina sakkarena Sanghan pujemi: I worship the Sangha with these items (followed by Pancappatitthitenavandana)”.

If the ceremony is attended by a group of people, let the representative of the group light the candles and incense sticks and place the flowers on the altar. Afterward, the person kneels at the altar holding his hands in a Namaskar. When he cites the words, the rest of the group repeats after him.

- 4) The person offers a tray containing articles of worship to the venerable monk(s) followed by three “Pancappatitthitenavandana”. Here again, in a group situation, only the group’s representative makes the offering. Afterward, he and the rest of the group perform Pancappatitthitenavandana together.
- 5) After performing Pancappatitthitenavandana, cite the pledge of Buddhamamaka in both Pali and Thai in front of the monk or monks as follows:

⁷ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Mahāniddes*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 65, no. 195, p. 612-614

⁸ This is the method of veneration whereby one kneels and touches the ground with the five parts of the body: the knees, the elbows, and the forehead.

Expression of Veneration Namō tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa
Namō tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa
Namō tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

Translation I humbly pay respect to the Lord Buddha who is an Arahāt.
I humbly pay respect to the Lord Buddha who is an Arahāt.
I humbly pay respect to the Lord Buddha who is an Arahāt.

Buddhamamaka Pledge Esaham bhante sucirapariniḥṭṭampi taṇ bhagavantam
saranam gacchāmi dhammanca buddhamamakoti maṃ
saṅgho dharetu

Translation Venerable monks, I take refuge in the Lord Buddha who
has attained Complete Nibbāna a long time ago, the
Dhamma and the Saṅgha. May the venerable monks
remember me as a Buddhamamaka. I take the Lord
Buddha as my own in that I venerate the Lord Buddha.

If the pledge is being made by a group of men and women, the words are changed as follows:

“**Esaham**” is changed to “**Ete mayam**” for men and “**Eta mayam**” for women.

“**Gacchāmi**” is changed to “**Gacchāma**” for both men and women.

“**Buddhamamakoti**” is changed to “**Buddhamamakati**” for both men and women.

“**Maṃ**” is changed to “**No**” for both men and women.

For the translation, change “I” to “we”.

For a woman pledging alone, change “**Buddhamamakoti**” to “**Buddhamamakati**”. The rest stays the same.

For a man and a woman pledging together, “**Buddhamamakoti**” is changed to “**Buddhamamakati**” for the woman. The rest stays the same.

- 6) Once the pledge was made, the monks hold their hands up in a Namaskar and say “Sadhu”. The Upasakas and Upasikas sit on the floor with their legs folded to one side. They hold their hands up in a Namaskar in preparation for the monks’ Dhamma lecture.
- 7) After the Dhamma lecture is over, Upasakas and Upasikas request the Five Precepts from the monks. This is a practice which most Buddhists are familiar with. Accepting the Five Precepts signifies the end of the Buddhamamaka Pledge. Buddhamamaka are Upasaka and Upasika who sit near the Triple Gem.

The Buddhamamaka Pledge can be shorter or longer than what is described above depending on the temple and the locality. In pronouncing oneself a Buddhamamaka, the main point lies in pledging to take refuge in the Triple Gem.

The easiest way to perform the Buddhamamaka Pledge is to make the pledge in your own language in front of the Buddha Image on your altar at home, at a temple, etc.

“I take refuge in the Lord Buddha who has attained Complete Nibbana a long time ago, the Dhamma and the Sangha. May the Lord Buddha remember me as a Buddhamamaka who takes the Lord Buddha as my own in that I venerate the Lord Buddha.”

If you take the pledge wholeheartedly, it will make you a true Upasaka or Upasika.

8.3 Upasaka and Upasika's Virtues

A good Upasaka or Upasika must possess the following five virtues. They must have faith in the Lord Buddha. They must observe the Precepts. They must not subscribe to popular charm or talisman. They must believe in Kamma not in charm or talisman. They must not seek any teachings outside of Buddhism. And they must support the work of the Buddhist Faith.⁹

1. Having faith in the Lord Buddha means having faith in the nine Buddha-Virtues.

Faith in this context means a belief which is born of having understood the nine Buddha-Virtues. Granted, the understanding may be at a basic level, yet it is a belief which is based on knowledge.

2. Observing the Precepts means observing the Five Precepts which include no killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct, no lying, and no consumption of alcohol.

For an Upasaka or an Upasika who wishes to practice chastity, he or she must observe the Eight Precepts. The three additional Precepts include no food after the midday meal, abstaining from using perfume on the body, abstaining from listening to unwholesome music, abstaining from watching unwholesome movies or plays, and abstaining from sleeping on a thick, soft bed filled with kapok and cotton. The Third Precept is changed from no sexual misconduct to no sexual activity.

3. Not subscribing to popular charm or talisman means not believing in signs, right timing, etc. It means not being superstitious. An Upasaka or an Upasika must believe in Kamma and the Law of Kamma instead. He or she knows that any time is a good time for performing good deeds.
4. Not seeking any teachings outside of Buddhism means not eagerly supporting a person who is ordained outside of Buddhism especially one who harbors Wrong View. The support of such an ordained person may cause the Upasaka or Upasika to develop Wrong View.
5. Supporting the work of the Buddhist Faith means supporting every aspect of Buddhism such as providing funds and requisites to the monks and novice monks, donating money to fund construction projects within the temple grounds, being a sponsor of ordination, helping to make arrangements for merit-making activities held at the temple, taking care of the sick monks as exemplified by the physician Jivaka Komarabhacca, helping to propagate and protect Buddhism as exemplified by the wealthy man Citta. Citta also had a special talent in giving Dhamma lectures.

Upasakas and Upasikas, who practice the above five virtues, stand to gain at least in two ways. Firstly, they are earning merit which will bless them with happiness and prosperity now and in future existences. Secondly, they are helping Buddhism to flourish.

⁹ *Suttantapiṭaka Aṅguttaranikāya Chakkanipāta. Caṇḍāla Sutta*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 65, no. 195, p. 612-614

8.4 The Importance of Upasaka and Upasika

Upasaka and Upasika are important because they provide for the monks and novice monks as well as supporting the work of the Buddhist Faith. Without Upasaka and Upasika, monks and novice monks will not be provided for, and Buddhism cannot survive. Buddhist Communities must be made up of monks and novice monks on one hand and Upasakas and Upasikas on the other. They are like two pieces of wood that lean against each other. They depend on each other.

8.4.1 Providing the Monks and Novice Monks with the Four Requisites

The Lord Buddha says, “Behold monks, lay devotees are your supporters. They provide you with robes, alms, shelter, and medicine.

Therefore, you must support the lay devotees by giving them Dhamma lectures that are lovely in the beginning, in the middle, and in the end. You should proclaim chastity and your Dhamma lectures should be pure, complete, and easy for the lay devotees to understand.

Behold monks, lay devotees and monks depend on each other in terms of alms and Dhamma lectures. Know that you practice chastity in order to leave the round of rebirth and put an end to suffering.¹⁰

It can be observed that whenever the Lord Buddha gave a Dhamma lecture to Upasakas, Upasikas, and the general public, He always began with the topic of “alms-giving” as exemplified by Anupubbikatha which was given to Mrs. Sujada. The Lord Buddha would teach about the Four Noble Truths only later.

However, when giving a Dhamma lecture to the monks, the Lord Buddha always began with “Precepts” as exemplified by the Ganakamoggalana Sutta which deals with self-training for the monks in a stepwise fashion.

For their own benefits, the first deed of merit that Upasaka and Upasika should perform is alms-giving. When they give alms, they are providing for the monks and novice monks who do not earn a living. The practice of alms-giving is not limited to the laity, for even the monks and novice monks should give alms whenever they can. All the Bodhisattas and wise sages in the past often gave all of their material wealth away in order to take up the religious life. When they did ordain as Buddhist monks, they kept the Precepts and practiced meditation so that they could be the laity’s merit-field.

¹⁰ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Itivuttaka. Bahukārū Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 45, no. 287, p. 677-678

Although the Lord Buddha allows monks to sustain themselves through Nissaya-4 such as using a discarded cloth, staying under a tree, drinking their own urine as medicine, the fact that Upasaka and Upasika can regularly provide the four necessities for the monks and novice monks will allow the monks and novice monks to have more time to practice meditation so that they can attain the Path and Fruit of Nibbana faster.

Luang Pu Wat Paknam had the following to say about alms-giving, “If every Buddhist in Thailand refused to give alms, if they shut their house, and closed their rice-pot, within a month, all of the monks would have to disrobe because they would not be able to remain in the monkhood, since they would have nothing to eat.”

“The Buddha-Power, the Dhamma-Power, and the Sangha-Power came into existence as a result of alms-giving. Our Lord Buddha could not happen had it not been for Sujada’s forty-nine lumps of rice-pudding. Having eaten the rice-pudding, our Lord Buddha had the strength to attain Self-Enlightenment. Such is the power of alms-giving. And it is also alms-giving that the Buddha-Power, the Dhamma-Power, and the Sangha-Power can be preserved.”

While Luang Pu was studying the Dhamma at Wat Phra Chetupon, he had a very hard time obtaining food during his alms-round. As a result, he did not receive enough food on certain days. Some days he received only one tangerine. Other days he received nothing at all. On one occasion, Luang Pu did not receive any food for two whole days. He thought, “I’ve always practiced righteousness and if I have to starve to death, so be it. If I cannot obtain food during my alms-round then I will not eat anything. I am willing to go without food. And if I should die from starvation, it means that no monks will ever go without food again. My death would be talked about and the people would feel very bad about it. As a result, they would make sure that they offer food to all the monks in the future.”

On the third day, Luang Pu obtained only a ladle-full of cooked rice and a banana during his alms-round. By the time he returned to his kuti, he felt worn out because he had not eaten anything for two whole days. After contemplating the food, Luang Pu started to eat. After the first bite, he saw an emaciated dog stumbling along past him. It was obvious to Luang Pu that the dog had gone without food for a while. As hungry as Luang Pu was, he felt such compassion for the dog that he rolled half of the rice into a ball and threw it to the dog along with half of the banana. At the same time, Luang Pu made a resolute wish, “As a result of this alms-giving, let me never know scarcity ever again.” As a result of this great and generous act, every time Luang Pu went on his alms-round, he would receive so much food that he had enough to share it with other monks.

8.4.2 Supporting the Work of the Buddhist Faith

In the history of Buddhism, whenever there were strong lay supporters especially when they were the leader of a country, wealthy individuals, academicians, and high-ranking officials, the work of the Buddhist Faith expanded and Buddhism flourished. This was evident during the reign of Asoka the Great who ruled India during 218 to 259 B.E.

After Asoka the Great became a Buddhist, he once offered alms to 600,000 monks at Asokaram. On that occasion, he asked the monks, “Venerable ones, how many topics does the Dhamma consist of?”

The monks answered, “Great king, the Dhamma which is taught by the Lord Buddha consists of 9 Anga or 84,000 Dhammakhandas.”

Asoka said, “We shall worship each Dhammakhandas with a shrine-hall.” Therefore, he donated the sum of 960 million and commanded his court officials to erect a shrine-hall together with a Cetiya in each of the 84,000 towns and cities.

When all of the construction was completed, Asoka commanded the town-crier of each town to let the people know that seven days hence a celebration would be held to celebrate the completion of the shrine-hall. The people were told to observe the Eight Precepts and get the city and its surrounding area ready for the celebration.

On the day of the celebration, Asoka the Great surrounded by the four branches of the armed forces numbering in the hundreds of thousands went to the shrine-hall. He stood amidst 800 million Bhikkus and 9,600,000 Bhikkunis. Out of these multitudes of Bhikkus and Bhikkunis, there were 100,000 Arahats.¹¹

This is a prime example of the power and importance of Upasakas.

In addition, Asoka the Great supported the Third Council which took place in the city of Pataliputra in 236 B.E. in order to put together all of the Lord Buddha’s Sayings. These have been preserved up until the present days. He also supported the propagation of Buddhism to other countries. He had sent nine different groups of monastic envoys to different countries outside of India. Had it not been for Asoka’s effort to propagate Buddhism outside of India, Buddhism might have disappeared altogether long before now. It might have disappeared along with the disappearance of Buddhism from India in 1700 B.E. And the recent effort put into reviving Buddhism in India has been made by Buddhists in the countries that have received the benefits of the work carried out by the nine different groups of monastic envoys during the reign of Asoka the Great.

In any period where Buddhism lacks the support of social leaders, it tends to suffer decline. The worst decline occurs when the leader of the country has Wrong View. Examples can be seen in several countries such as China.

¹¹ *Paṭhamasamantapāsādikaplaṇḍi Aṭṭhakathā-vinayaṇḍikā*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 1, p. 87-89

Between 1118 and 1123 B.E., during the reign of King Suan Ti, disaster struck Buddhism in Jew Province. Buddhism and Taoism were abolished. Two million monks were forced to disrobe and 40,000 temples were confiscated. Buddha Images made of gold and copper were melted down to make gold bouillons and gold coins.¹² During the reign of King Hian Jong, new temples could not be built, Buddha Images could not be cast, and Suttas could not be printed without official permission. In 1302 B.E., a law was passed which stated that to ordain, an ordination candidate had to be able to memorize one thousand pages of the Suttas or pay the government an ordination fee of 100,000 epae (where 25 epaes equal 1 baht).¹³

In 1385 B.E., during the reign of Emperor Boo Jong, he was a believer of Taoism and he appointed a Taoist monk as state minister. In 1389 B.E., a debate between a Buddhist monk and a Taoist monk was held in the presence of the emperor. The winner of the debate was the Buddhist monk. Emperor Boo Jong became so incensed that he forced more than 260,000 male and female Buddhist monks to disrobe. He confiscated monastic properties, abolished Buddhist temples, melted down Buddha Images, burnt the Scriptures, etc. His act caused Buddhism in China to suffer decline for hundreds of years. At other times, government officials sold ordination tickets and those who wished to ordain but did not have the money for the ticket ended up not ordaining. In 1689 B.E., every Buddhist monk in China had to pay tax unless he was handicapped or over sixty years old.¹⁴ Nonetheless, there were different times when Buddhism in China flourished because it was supported by its king. One example included the reign of King Tang Tai Jong.

¹² Phradhammapititaka (Payut Payutto). **Buddhasartsana Nai Asia**. [Buddhism in Asia], B.E. 2550, p. 58

¹³ Ibid., p. 61-62

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 62-64

8.5 Upasakas and Upasikas during the Lord Buddha's Time

8.5.1 Upasakas and Upasikas during the Lord Buddha's Time

Upasakas and Upasikas during the Lord Buddha's time came from every social class: royalty, Brahmin, Vessa, and Sudda. They might have come from different social classes but as Buddhists they had equal opportunity when it came to merit accumulation.

- 1) **Royalty:** These are high-caste individuals and their role is to govern the country, subdue criminals, and wage war against invaders. Such individuals include kings, royal family members, high-ranking officials such as court advisers, ministers, etc.

During the Lord Buddha's time, many royalties were Buddhists. They had vowed to be Upasakas and Upasikas. India in those days was divided into twenty-one kingdoms. There were altogether five powerful kingdoms. These included the kingdoms of Magadha, Kosala, Avanti, Vajji, and Vansa. The rulers of these powerful kingdoms were Buddhists: King Bimbisara of Magadha, King Pasendikosala of Kosala, King Candapajjoti of Avanti, King Licchavi of Vajji, and King Udena of Vansa.

Other Buddhist rulers included King Suddhodana of Sakka, our Lord Buddha's father, the rulers of Koliya, the rulers of Malla, King Korabaya of Kuru, Prince Sujata of Assaka, etc.

When the rulers of a kingdom became Buddhists, it was easy for Buddhism to be spread to its people. When our Lord Buddha went to the city of Rajagarh in the kingdom of Magadha in order to teach King Bimbisara, on that occasion, the king along with 110,000 Brahmins and wealthy men attained the Fruit of Sotapanna while 10,000 individuals pledged themselves to be Upasakas.¹⁵ On another occasion, King Bimbisara called a meeting of all of his subjects from 80,000 localities so that they could listen to the Lord Buddha's Dhamma lectures. As a result, a large number of individuals were able to attain Ariyahood.¹⁶

- 2) **Brahmin:** These are individuals whose profession is to teach the general public as well as performing religious ceremonies. Some Brahmins govern a city, a village, or a locality. Brahmin can be a person who practices renunciation as well as a householder.

The people in India before the happening of the Lord Buddha subscribed to Brahmanism. However, with the happening of the Lord Buddha, a large number of these religious and social leaders had become Upasakas and Upasikas.

¹⁵ *Vinayapiṭaka Mahāvagga Part I*, Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 6, no. 58, p. 112-113

Jātakatthakathā Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Jataka. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 55, p. 134

¹⁶ *Vinayapiṭaka Mahāvagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 7, no. 1, p. 1-4

Some of these Brahmins included Pokakharasati, the ruler of Ukakattha City, Sonadanda, the ruler of Campa City, Kutadanta, the head of Khanumatta Village, Canki, the head of Opasada Village, Lohicca, the head of Salavatika, the sect leader Bavari and his sixteen followers of Assaka City. Other well-known Brahmins included Janusoni, Brahmayu, Subha, Kapadika, Uggatasarira, etc. Many of these Brahmins were knowledgeable ascetics that came to see the Lord Buddha with the attention of holding a debate with Him. However, having listened to the Lord Buddha's Dhamma lecture, they became believers. One of these ascetics included Saccaka, a member of the Jain Order.

- 3) **Vessa:** These are members of the general public that earn a living by working as a farmer, a craftsman, a merchant, etc. Many wealthy Upasaks and Upasikas during the Lord Buddha's time belonged to this social class. These included Jotika, Jadila, Mendaka, Anathapindika, Visakha, etc. The first three of these wealthy men possess so much material wealth that it was inexhaustible. They had enough wealth to support the entire world population. Members of this social class especially wealthy men and women were important supporters who provided the monks and novice monks with the four requisites.
- 4) **Sudda:** These are laborers or servants, and include the four kinds of slaves: Slaves that are born inside the master's household, slaves that are bought with money, slaves that apply for work in a household, and slaves that are prisoners of war. They are considered low class individuals.

Their master may be a king, a Brahmin, or a wealthy person. When their master became a believer of Buddhism, they became believers as well. Examples included Punna, Mendaka's slave and Punna, Rajagaha's slave. The latter Punna was the one whose plowed field turned into gold as a result of the great amount of merit earned by offering food and water to Phra Sariputra Thera who had just spent a week being immersed in the bliss of emancipation.

8.5.2 Important Upasakas and Upasikas during the Lord Buddha's Time

There were many important Upasakas and Upasikas during the Lord Buddha's time. Some were kings. Some were Brahmins. And some were wealthy individuals. These included King Bimbisara, King Pasendikosala, King Ajatasattu, Jotika, Jadila, Mendaka, Anathapindika, Visakha, etc. Here, some details will be given about Anathapindika and Visakha.

1. Anathapindika

He was recognized by the Lord Buddha as being the most excellent in the area of alms-giving. In the Commentary, it was written that Anathapindika had made a resolute wish for this lofty position during the time of the Lord Padumuttara Buddha. In that existence, he was born in the city of Hansavadi and had the opportunity to listen to the Lord Padumuttara Buddha's Dhamma lectures. On one occasion, he witnessed an Upasaka being recognized as being the most excellent in the area of alms-giving, and he aspired to the same kind of recognition. Therefore, he had accumulated a vast amount of merit and made the resolute wish that one day he would receive such recognition from a future Buddha.

After that existence, he had spent countless lifetimes pursuing Perfections throughout the entire 100,000 Kappas. During the time of our Lord Gautama Buddha, he was born the son of a wealthy man called Sumana of the city of Savatthi. He was given the name "Sudatta". However, being a most generous alms-giver, he was given the nickname "Anathapindika" which means "One who gives lumps of rice to the poor and destitute". He earned a living as a merchant. On one occasion, he took five hundred wagons laden with goods to trade in the city of Rajagarh. He was told by his close friend, the wealthy man Rajagaha that the Lord Buddha had happened and was at the time staying at Sitavana Forest in the city of Rajagarh. Anathapindika was so overjoyed to have heard the news that he was determined to see the Lord Buddha at dawn the next morning.

Our Lord Buddha gave him a Dhamma lecture which consisted of Anupubbikatha and the Four Noble Truths. During the lecture, Anathapindika attained the Fruit of Sotapana. He said to the Lord Buddha, "I take refuge in the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. May the Most Exalted One remember me as an Upasaka who gives his life to the Triple Gem from this day onward. I ask that the Most Exalted One and the venerable monks come to receive food from me in the morrow for the sake of my merit accumulation and joy."

Anathapindika returned to Rajagaha's house to make preparations for the alms-giving. He offered food to the Lord Buddha and the venerable monks the next day. After the meal was over, he said to the Lord Buddha, "May the Most Exalted One and the venerable monks accept my invitation to come and spend the Rains-Retreat in the city of Savatthi where I live. The Lord Buddha answered, "Behold, wealthy man, every Buddha prefers the forest." Anathapindika humbly acknowledged the Lord Buddha's preference.

Building the Jetavana Temple

After finishing his business in Rajagarh, Anathapindika returned to Savatthi in order to build a temple for the Lord Buddha and the venerable monks. He went around the city to look for a proper location for the temple by using the following criteria:

- 1) It should not be too close or too far away from a community.
- 2) It should be an easy commute.
- 3) It should have few people during the day and it should be completely quiet at night.
- 4) It should be a place conducive to meditation practice.

Anathapindika thought Prince Jeta's park met all the criteria. Therefore, he went to see Prince Jeta with the intention of buying the park from him. Prince Jeta told Anathapindika that if he really wants to purchase the park, he must line the entire park with coins. Anathapindika told his servants to bring wagons laden with coins worth 180 million to line the entire park. He spent an additional sum of 180 million for the construction of the temple and its different buildings.

After the construction was completed, Anathapindika asked the Lord Buddha what he ought to do with the temple. The Lord Buddha said, "Wealthy man, give the Jetavana Temple to the monks who are already here and those who will be coming here from the four cardinal points." Anathapindika did as told. Later, he spent an additional sum of 180 million to celebrate the completion of the temple. Overall, Anathapindika spent a total of 540 million on the Jetavana Temple.

Making Merit at the Temple Twice a Day

Anathapindika went to see the Lord Buddha at Jetavana Temple twice a day. He never went to the temple empty-handed, for he thought the young monks and novice monks might look at him to see if he carried anything with him to the temple. When he came to the temple before the monks' mealtime, he would have his servants carry food for the monks for him. If it was after mealtime, he would have his servants carry a beverage and five kinds of medicine which included clarified butter, cheese, oil, honey, and cane juice. In the evening, he would bring flowers, scented items, skin-salves, cloths, etc. The wealthy man accumulated merit in this fashion every day. Moreover, he often invited 2,000 venerable monks to have a meal at his house. Should any monk have need for food, water, or medicine, he would provide for him.

Even when his wealth nearly disappeared, he continued with his alms-giving.

At one point in Anathapindika's life, his wealth was nearly gone because a merchant friend had borrowed 180 million from him and some of the money buried near the riverbank which was worth 180 million was washed away. Even then, he continued to give alms to the monks. One day, the Lord Buddha asked, "Wealthy man, are you still giving alms?" Anathapindika answered, "I still do, Most Exalted One. However, I now can only offer rice of an inferior quality and the juice of pickled vegetables." The Lord Buddha said to him, "Do not think that the quality of your alms is poor. When the mind is refined, the alms given to the Arahats and the Buddha can never be considered poor."

The celestial being who dwelled at the gate of Anathapindika's residence knew of the wealthy man's hardship and wished to give him an advice. Therefore, he appeared to Anathapindika and said, "You need to stop giving beyond your means and you should try instead to conserve whatever is left of your wealth."

Anathapindika said to the celestial being, "Even if 100,000 men said the same thing to me, I would still not change a thing. The words you uttered are inappropriate. Therefore, you can no longer live here in my house."

The celestial being had to leave the wealthy man's residence with his babies but they had no other place to go. He thought he needed to ask the wealthy man to forgive him so that he could return to his old dwelling. Later, he was given an advice by King Sakka, "You should disguise yourself as the wealthy man's clerk and go after the 180 million owed him by his merchant friend. Afterward, you should recover the 180 million which has been dislocated from the riverbank as well as an additional sum of 180 million which belongs to no one and put all of the money inside an empty room in the wealthy man's residence. Only then should you go and ask him to forgive you." The celestial being followed King Sakka's advice and he was restored to his former dwelling.

Anathapindika Became Wealthy Once Again as a Result of His Accumulated Merit.

In the city of Savatthi, there was a Brahmin who was an expert in lucky charm. He assumed that Anathapindika became wealthy once again because of his lucky charm and he wanted to steal it from the wealthy man.

Therefore, he went to Anathapindika's residence and looked around to see where the lucky charm might be located at. He saw a chicken with pure white feathers in a gold cage. Upon checking the chicken, he found its comb to be where the lucky charm was. Therefore, he asked Anathapindika for the chicken and Anathapindika gave it to him.

However, as soon as Anathapindika gave his permission, the lucky charm moved from the chicken to the crystal sphere which was placed above the head of Anathapindika's bed. Therefore, the Brahmin asked for the crystal sphere... The lucky charm moved to the walking stick and the Brahmin asked for the walking stick... The lucky charm moved from the walking stick to the head of Bunnalaksana, Anathapindika's wife.

Knowing that he could not very well ask for the wealthy man's wife, he resigned himself to the fact that the lucky charm belonged to Anathapindika and not to him so he left the wealthy man's house.

Later, Anathapindika recounted the story to the Lord Buddha. And the Lord Buddha had this to say, "In the past, even when a lucky charm happened to a person possessed of a small amount of merit, it went instead to lie at the feet of a person possessed of a vast amount of merit... A person possessed of a small amount of merit, be he creative or not, works diligently to accumulate wealth but it is the person possessed of a vast amount of merit who gets to spend it. Material wealth avoids other people but goes to stay with people possessed of a vast amount of merit. The chicken, the crystal sphere, the walking stick, and the woman Bunnalaksana happened to Anathapindika because he has no demerit but only accumulated merit."¹⁷

Being a Virtuous Friend

Anathapindika was a virtuous friend to everyone in his family including his wife, his sons, his daughters, his slaves, and his workers. Everyone in the family followed his example where merit-making was concerned. At one point, he even hired his son who did not believe in the Triple Gem to go and listen to the Lord Buddha's Dhamma lectures. He paid his son 100 kahapanas and sometimes 1,000 kahapanas. His son, Kala, finally attained the Fruit of Sotapanna. The wealthy man frequently invited his five hundred friends who subscribed to another religion to come for Dhamma lectures at the Jetavana Temple. The result was that all five hundred friends eventually attained the Fruit of Sotapanna.

Anathapindika put his life on the line pursuing Perfections all throughout his life. After he died, he was reborn in the Tusita Realm where he enjoys stupendous celestial wealth.

2. Visakha

The great Upasika Visakha was recognized by the Lord Buddha as being the most excellent in the area of alms-giving. She had made the resolute wish for this lofty position since the time of the Lord Padumuttara Buddha just as Anathapindika had done 100,000 Kappas ago. At the time, Visakha was born in the city of Hansavadi. She was a friend of the Upasika who had been recognized by the Lord Padumuttara as being the most excellent in the area of alms-giving. She had gone with this friend to listen to the Lord Buddha's Dhamma lectures at the temple every morning and every evening. She saw how her friend asked from the Lord Buddha the eight wishes and how she could easily converse with the Lord Buddha. She wondered what merit her friend had accumulated that allowed her to be so close to the Lord Buddha.

¹⁷ *Jataka-kapphakāthā. Aṭṭhakathā-Jataka Tikanipāṭa-Jataka*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 58, p. 273-280

She asked the Lord Padumuttara Buddha, “What is this woman to the Most Exalted One?”

The Lord Buddha answered, “She is the most excellent Upasika.”

She asked the Lord Buddha, “What Kamma has she performed in order to be the most excellent Upasika?”

The Lord Buddha answered, “She had wished for it throughout the entire 100,000 Kappas.”

She asked the Lord Buddha, “Most Exalted One, I now wish for the same thing. Will my wish be fulfilled?”

The Lord Buddha answered, “Yes, it will.”

She said to the Lord Buddha, “In that case, I ask that the Most Exalted One along with 100,000 venerable monks kindly receive food from me for the next seven days.”

She had made a food-offering for seven consecutive days. On the seventh day, she also made an offering of robes made of the finest material. After all was said and done, she knelt at the Lord Buddha’s feet and said, “Most Exalted One, as a result of the merit accumulated throughout these seven days, I do not wish for power in the Celestial Realm. What I wish for is the ability to ask for the eight wishes from a future Lord Buddha and to be recognized as being the most excellent Upasika by that same Lord Buddha.”

The Lord Padumuttara employed His perfect insight to look into the future 100,000 Kappas hence and said, “At the end of the 100,000th Kappa from now, there will happen a Lord Buddha by the name of Gautama. In that existence, you will be an Upasika by the name of Visakha. You will receive the eight wishes from the Lord Buddha and you will be recognized as the most excellent Upasika who provides the four requisites to the monks.”

She had continued to accumulate merit all throughout her life in that existence. Consequently, her round of rebirth had taken place in the Celestial Realm and the Human Realm only. During the time of the Lord Kassapa Buddha, she was born the daughter of the ruler of the kingdom of Kasi. Her name was Sanghadasi. She had accumulated merit all throughout her life and had made the same resolute wish in the presence of the Lord Kassapa Buddha.

During the time of our Lord Gautama Buddha, she was born the daughter of the wealthy man Dhananjaya. Dhananjaya was the son of the fabulously wealthy man Mendaka of the city of Bhaddiya in the kingdom of Anga. This kingdom was under the sovereignty of King Bimbisara of Rajagarh. Her parents named her Visakha. When she was seven years old, our Lord Gautama Buddha knew that many in this city would attain Enlightenment. Therefore, He went to the city to teach these very people. After having listened to the Lord Buddha’s Dhamma lecture, Visakha attained the Fruit of Sotapanna at the very tender age of just seven years old.

The Five Characteristics of Feminine Beauty

As a result of her vast amount of accumulated merit, Visakha was blessed with the five characteristics of feminine beauty which include beautiful hair, beautiful lips, beautiful teeth, beautiful complexion, and beautiful age.

Beautiful hair: Her hair looks like a bunch of peacock feathers when tied together. When it is untied, its end curves upward beautifully. Even when Visakha was 120 years old, she had not a single gray hair.

Beautiful lips: Her lips are like ripe gourds in that they are full and smooth.

Beautiful teeth: Her teeth are even like rows of diamonds and white like the color of a polished conch shell.

Beautiful complexion: It can be light like the hursinghar blooms or dark like the green lotus blooms. It never requires the use of cosmetics. The Commentary does not say whether Visakha's complexion was light or dark.

Beautiful age: It means that a woman may have given birth to ten children but still looks like she has only given birth just once. Moreover, she looks about sixteen all throughout her adult life.

Marrying Punnavatana

When Visakha was about fifteen or sixteen years old, she married the son of a wealthy man called Migara. His name was Punnavatana. This family lived in the city of Savatthi. On the day that the wealthy man Dananjaya sent his daughter to her bridegroom, he sent with her the sum of 540 million. He also gave her a highly valuable robe made of precious gems, silver, gold, etc. This robe of jewels is called "Mahaladaprasadhana". It cost a total of 90 million. The precious gems in the robe included four liters of diamonds, eleven liters of pearls, twenty liters of opals, thirty-three liters of crystals, etc. This particular robe of jewels is the fruit of merit derived from having offered robes to the venerable monks during Kathina, etc. The Commentary explains that the ultimate fruit of robes-offering for women is the precious Mahaladaprasadhana Robe and for men it is the supernatural appearance of alms-bowl and robe. During the time of the Lord Kassapa Buddha, Visakha had offered robes to more than 20,000 venerable monks.

And before Visakha left for her bridegroom's house, her father Dhanajaya had given her the following advice in regards to a woman's conduct in her husband's household:

- 1) Do not carry fire from inside to outside: It means do not tell people outside the household negative things about her in-laws and her husband.
- 2) Do not carry fire from outside to inside: It means do not talk about other people's problems inside the household.
- 3) Give only to those who give: It means lending things only to those who return what they have borrowed.
- 4) Do not give to those who do not give: It means do not lend things to those who do not return what they have borrowed.
- 5) Give to those who give and do not give: It means lending a helping hand to the relatives that come for help whether or not they can pay it back.
- 6) Sit comfortably: It means do not sit in an inappropriate place.
- 7) Eat comfortably: It means do not eat until her in-laws and husband have eaten.
- 8) Sleep comfortably: It means do not go to bed until her in-laws and husband have already gone to bed.
- 9) Tend the fire: It means treat her in-laws and husband with care.
- 10) Be submissive to the Devas within: It means treating her in-laws and husband as though they were Devas.

Being a Virtuous Friend

Originally, Migara the wealthy man had Wrong View and believed in naked ascetics. He had been in the habit of inviting these naked ascetics to have a meal at his home. After Visakha joined the household, she had been a virtuous friend to everyone in the family. She invited the Lord Buddha and the venerable monks to have a meal at Migara's house. Having heard the Lord Buddha's Dhamma lecture, Migara attained the Fruit of Sotapanna. She was a virtuous friend to a large number of people as well. There were five hundred men in Savatthi who told their wives to spend time with Visakha in the hope that they would learn how to be heedful from her. Visakha took the women to the temple and after having listened to the Lord Buddha's Dhamma lecture, all five hundred women attained the Fruit of Sotapanna.¹⁸

¹⁸ *Suttantapiṭaka Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Gāthā-Dhammapada*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 42, p. 143

Asking for the Eight Wishes from the Lord Buddha¹⁹

One day, Visakha told the Lord Buddha that she wished to ask Him for eight wishes. She said that she wished to provide bathing cloths for the venerable monks. She wished to provide food for visiting monks. She wished to provide food for departing monks. She wished to provide food for sick monks. She wished to provide food for the monks who were nursing the sick monks. She wished to provide medicine for sick monks. She wished to regularly provide the monks with the milk of young rice. And for the female monks, she wished to provide them with bathing cloths for the rest of her life.

The Lord Buddha asked Visakha the reasons for her eight wishes, and Visakha said,

“Today I told my female slave to go to the temple and inform the venerable monks that the food was ready. When she arrived at the temple, she saw the monks showering in the nude out in the open and mistook them for naked ascetics and returned to report to me that there were no monks at the temple.

- 1) Nakedness is unseemly; therefore, I wish to offer bathing cloths to the venerable monks for the rest of my life.
- 2) Visiting monks do not know their way around town and it is difficult for them to go on their alms-round. They can eat the food I provide for them until they know their way around and have an easier time going on their alms-round. Therefore, I wish to provide food for visiting monks for the rest of my life.
- 3) If departing monks have to go on an alms-round, they may miss the caravan or arrive at their place of destination late in the day. When they eat the food I provide for them, they will be able to leave with the caravan or reach their place of destination at a suitable time. Therefore, I wish to provide food for departing monks for the rest of my life.
- 4) When sick monks do not eat nutritious food, they may get worse or die. When they eat the nutritious food I provide for them, their condition may improve or they may not die. Therefore, I wish to provide food for sick monks for the rest of my life.
- 5) When monks who are nursing the sick monks have to go on an alms-round, they will be late in giving food to the sick monks and they themselves will have to go without food. If they can eat the food I provide for them, they will be able to bring food back for the sick monks in time. Therefore, I wish to provide food for the monks who are nursing the sick monks for the rest of my life.
- 6) When the sick monks do not have good medicine, they may get worse or die. If they can take the medicine I provide for them, they may not get worse or die.

¹⁹ *Vinayapiṭaka Mahāvagga Part II*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 7, p. 284-287

- 7) The Most Exalted One has permitted the consumption of boiled rice. And I appreciate the benefits of boiled rice; therefore, I wish to provide boiled rice for the venerable monks for the rest of my life.
- 8) Female monks bathe in the nude. Nakedness is unseemly; therefore, I wish to provide them with bathing cloths for the rest of my life.

The Lord Buddha said, “Very good, Visakha. You’ve asked for these eight wishes for the right reasons. Therefore, I grant them to you.”

Building Pubbaram for the Sangha

Visakha donated the sum of 270 million in order to build Pubbaram Temple and celebrate its completion. She purchased the land for the sum of 90 million. She paid an additional 90 million for the construction of the different buildings within the temple grounds. And she spent an additional 90 million in celebrating the completion of the temple. Phra Mahamoggalana Thera oversaw the construction of the temple and its various buildings. There was a two-storied castle. The upper floor contained five hundred rooms and the lower floor also contained five hundred rooms. Spread out around the main castle were five hundred two-storied houses, five hundred smaller castles, and five hundreds halls. The construction of the Pubbaram Temple took nine months to complete. She celebrated its completion by inviting the Lord Buddha and the venerable monks to stay in the temple for a period of four months. During the four months, she gave alms daily.

One of the traditions practiced by very wealthy individuals and kings during the time of the Lord Buddha was building a temple where people in the kingdom could go to accumulate merit. Besides Jetavana Temple and Pubbaram Temple, there were other temples built during the time of the Lord Buddha. These included:

No.	Name of the Temple	City	Built by
1	Veluvana Temple	Rajagarh	King Bimbisara
2	Nigrodharam	Kapilavastu	Sakya royalties
3	Jetavana Temple	Savatthi	Anathapindika
4	Pubbaram Temple	Savatthi	Visakha
5	Ghositaram	Kosambi	Ghosita
6	Kukakutaram	Kosambi	Kukakuta
7	Pavarikambavana	Kosambi	Pavarika
8	Jivakambavana	Rajagarh	Jivaka Komarabhacca
9	Ambatakavana	Macchikasandanagara	Citta
10	Ambavana	Vesali	Mrs. Ambapali

8.6 The Pursuit of Perfections for the Attainment of Ariyahood

The pursuit of Perfections for the attainment of Ariyahood for Upasakas and Upasikas is the same as for the Bodhisattas and the Perfected Disciples. The wealthy man Anathapindika and the wealthy lady Visakha exemplify the Upasakas and Upasikas who were recognized as being the most excellent in their particular area. The Tripitaka and the Commentary tell us that these most excellent Upasakas and Upasikas had spent countless existences in their pursuit of Perfections. They received the first Buddha-Forecast from the Lord Padumuttara Buddha 100,000 Kappas ago. The Lord Padumuttara Buddha is the tenth Buddha in the family of twenty-five Buddhas.

In other words, every Upasaka and Upasika who were the most excellent in their particular area during the time of the Lord Gautama Buddha had all received the first Buddha-Forecast from the Lord Padumuttara Buddha. After the first Buddha-Forecast, each of them had to pursue Perfections for 100,000 Kappas before their resolute wish came to fruition. Within this unimaginably long period, fifteen Buddhas had happened starting with the Lord Sumedha Buddha to the Lord Kassapa Buddha. In the existences that they met the Lord Buddha, they would accumulate a vast amount of merit under that Buddha and received the same Buddha-Forecast that their resolute wish would be fulfilled during the time of the Lord Gautama Buddha. Other Upasakas and Upasikas had to pursue Perfections in like manner but there was no mention anywhere that they had received the Buddha-Forecast.

The principles, which have guided these most excellent Upasakas and Upasikas in their pursuit of Perfections, are based on Anupubbikatha and the Four Noble Truths. These principles include practicing the Three Ways of Making Merit: alms-giving, observing the Precepts, and practicing meditation. It means that Upasakas and Upasikas can practice Anupubbikatha, the Four Noble Truths, and pursue the Ten Perfections by practicing the three ways of making merit.

The Three Ways of Making Merit are also what every Buddhist should practice on a regular basis. Details about the Three Ways of Making Merit are presented in the course SB 101 Buddhist Way of Life. Relevant courses include SB 202 Buddhist Culture, GB 102 Recipe for Success in Personal Development. SB 202 deals with daily practices which help Buddhists to develop good habits whereas GB 102 deals with Life's 38 Blessings in detail.



Assignments:

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

Chapter 9

The Global Center of Buddhism

Chapter 9

The Global Center of Buddhism

The Global Center of Buddhism

9.1 What Is a Religious Center?

9.2 Religious Centers in the Present Days

9.2.1 Vatican City: The Center of Christianity

9.2.2 Mecca: The Center of Islam

9.3 The Global Center of Buddhism

9.3.1 The Center of Buddhism during the Lord Buddha's Time

9.3.2 The Center of Buddhism in the Present Days

Concepts

1. A religious center is an organization or a temple which has in place venue, personnel, and a management team to organize meetings of believers on various occasions or it may be a religion's headquarters.
2. Important religions have their religious centers such as Vatican City for Christianity, Mecca for Islam, etc.
3. In Buddhism, the temple serves as the religious center. During the Lord Buddha's time, it was Jetavana Temple. This temple was built by the wealthy man Anathapindika. He paid for the land by lining every square inch of the land with coins. In other Buddha-Eons, the purchase of land used as the Buddhist Center was carried out in like manner but it may be lined with coins or gold.

The center of Buddhism in Thailand in the present days is Buddhamonton in Salaya Tambon, Buddhamonton Amphoe, Nakorn Pathom Province. It has been the global venue of Visakha Puja Day ceremonies.

Being the center of Buddhism is a great honor as well as a great responsibility and the work requires the cooperation of many organizations. Since Wat Phra Dhammakaya is a large temple with the largest number of monks, Upasakas, and Upasikas, it has been the place where hundreds of thousands of monks as well as Buddhists come to meet regularly. It will continue to be the place for such meetings and its aim is to be the place where at least one million Buddhist monks and Buddhists can come to meet regularly.

Objectives

To enable the student to understand the importance of having a Buddhist Center and the importance of fostering unity among members of the Buddhist Communities.

Chapter 9

The Global Center of Buddhism

9.1 What Is a Religious Center?

A religious center is an organization or a temple which has in place venue, personnel, and the management team to organize meetings of believers on various occasions or it may be a religion's headquarters as in the case of Vatican City.

Generally a religious center should cover a large area and has enough space to accommodate a large number of believers that come from every corner of the world. It should also be staffed with knowledgeable and able personnel.

A religious center serves to unite its believers. It should also serve as the headquarters where every relevant activity is planned, organized, and carried out for the purpose of keeping the particular religion strong.

The Lord Buddha teaches, “Monks, meet together often. Attend the meeting together and leave the meeting together. Perform every monastic duty together. If you do this always, then you can hope for progression alone, for there will be no regression.”

This saying of the Lord Buddha does not mean the meeting of monks in a temple only but it means the meeting of all the Buddhist Communities. But such a meeting requires a religious center.

Without a religious center, believers cannot come together as one to perform religious activities together. Believers live separate lives and go their separate ways. Should conflicts, misunderstanding, or problems arise within the religious faith as a whole or within a particular branch, it will be difficult for its believers to come together to help solve the problem. Without a religious center, the religion cannot hope to last very long.

9.2 Religious Centers in the Present Days

Every major religion in the world has its own religious center. Here only two will be presented: Christianity and Islam.

9.2.1 Vatican City: The Center of Christianity

State of the Vatican City is located in Rome, Italy. It is the place where the Pope lives. The Pope is the religious leader of Catholicism. State of the Vatican City is the smallest country in the world. It is ruled by the Pope whose reign ends at his death. The current Pope's name is Pope Benedict XVI. He was crowned on April 24, 2548 B.E.

History: On February 11, 1929 (2472 B.E.), State of the Vatican City and Italy signed an agreement to recognize State of the Vatican City as an independent state with its own sovereignty.

Vatican City has been the world's center of art and culture. The Apostolic Library of the Vatican was established in the thirteenth century.

In the fifteenth century, Secret Archive of the Vatican, the Vatican Museums, and St. Peter's Basilica were established. It publishes its own multilingual semi-official newspaper called L'Osservatore Romano through the Vatican Polyglot Press. The first publication came out in 1961 (2504 B.E.).

Since 1931 (2474 B.E.), Vatican Radio has broadcasted its programs in thirty different languages using short-wave, medium-wave, and FM frequencies. Currently, Vatican City has three radio stations and one television station.

Governance: Politics takes place in an elective absolute monarchy in which the Pope exercises principal legislative, executive, and judicial power over the State of Vatican City. The current Pope is German. He was born Joseph Ratzinger and is now 78 years old. He was crowned on April 19, 2548 B.E. by the College of Cardinals.

Administration: Legislative authority is vested in the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State, a body of seven Cardinals appointed by the Pope for five-year periods, and led by the President of the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State.

A Cardinal is a senior ecclesiastical official and ecclesiastical prince of the Catholic Church.

The Roman Curia is the administrative apparatus of the Holy See and the central governing body of the entire Catholic Church together with the Pope. The government of the Roman Catholic Church is carried out by the Secretariat of State. It is headed by the Cardinal Secretary of State. It performs all the political and diplomatic functions of Vatican City and the Holy See.

On June 28, 2532 B.E., Pope John Paul II restructured the Secretariat of State by dividing it into two sections.

1. The Section for General Affairs or The First Section: It is responsible for affairs relating to the day-to-day service of the Papal office, etc.
2. The Section for Relations with States or the Second Section: It is responsible for the Holy See's diplomatic corps, its relations with civil society, negotiating concordats with States relating to the Church's position and status, ensuring representation of the Holy See before international organizations.

A Bishop is an ordained or consecrated member of the Christian clergy who is generally entrusted with a position of authority and oversight.

A Priest is an ordained member of the Christian clergy who is authorized to perform sacred rites.

The Roman Congregations are a type of dicastery (department with a jurisdiction) of the Roman Curia, the central administrative organism of the Catholic Church. Each Congregation is led by a Cardinal. There are altogether nine Congregations.

- 1) The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: It oversees Catholic doctrine.
- 2) The Congregation for the Causes of Saints: It oversees the complex process which leads to the canonization of saints.
- 3) The Congregation for the Oriental Churches: It is responsible for contact with Eastern Catholic Churches for the sake of assisting their development, protecting their rights, and maintaining whole and entire the one Catholic Church, alongside the liturgical, disciplinary and spiritual patrimony of the Latin Rite, the heritage of the various Oriental Christian traditions.
- 4) The Congregation for Bishops: It oversees the selection of new bishops that are not in mission territories or those areas that come under the jurisdiction of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, pending papal approval. It also schedules the papal audiences required quinquennially for bishops and arranges the creation of new dioceses.
- 5) The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments: It handles most affairs relating to liturgical practices of the Latin Catholic Church as distinct from the Eastern Catholic Churches and also some technical matters relating to the Sacraments.
- 6) The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples: It is responsible for missionary work and related activities in Africa, Asia, etc.

A missionary is a member of a religious group sent into an area to do evangelism or ministries of service.

- 7) The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life: It is responsible for everything which concerns institutes of consecrated life and Society of Apostolic Life regarding their government, discipline, studies, goods, rights, and privileges.
- 8) The Congregation for the Clergy: It is responsible for overseeing matters regarding priests and deacons not belonging to religious orders. It handles requests for dispensation from active priestly ministry, as well as the legislation governing presbyteral councils and other organizations of priests around the world.
- 9) The Congregation for Catholic Education: It is responsible for seminaries and houses of formation of religious and secular institutes. It is responsible for universities, faculties, institutes and higher schools of study, either ecclesial or civil dependent on ecclesial persons. It is responsible for schools and educational institutes depending on ecclesiastical authorities.

Geography: The territory of Vatican City includes the Apostolic Palace, Castel Gandolfo, Gregorian University, and thirteen churches in Rome. Vatican City covers an area of 110 acres or 2/5 square kilometers. It contains St. Peter's Basilica, museums, libraries, and the Pope's residence. Inside Vatican City there are the Vatican Gardens, radio stations, post office, railway station, Vatican City banks and shops.

Since Vatican City is very small, it is used as the headquarters of Roman Catholicism Administration but not the meeting place of its believers.

Economy: Vatican City receives its financial support from the lay members of the Roman Catholic Church worldwide. This source of financial support is called Peter's Pence. Its other sources of income include the sale of stamps, coins, medals and tourist mementos; fees for admission to museums; publications sales, as well as worldwide financial activities conducted by the Patrimony of the Holy See.

Population: Vatican City has about 900 citizens. They either live inside the Vatican's walls or serve in the Holy See's diplomatic service in embassies around the world. The Vatican citizenry consists almost entirely of two groups: clergy, most of whom work in the service of the Holy See, and a very few as officials of the state; and the Swiss Guard. There are about 200 women and the Swiss Guard has about 100 members. Those who serve in the Holy See's diplomatic service, their spouse and children assume Vatican citizenry only during their tenure. Children over the age of twenty-five must take on his parents' original citizenship.

9.2.2 Mecca: The Center of Islam

Mecca or Makkah is an important city for Islam

Each year, millions of Muslims attend the Hajj¹ in Mecca. The Hajj is a demonstration of solidarity of the Muslim people and their submission to Allah. In Mecca, there is a mosque called Masjid al-Haram. It was built around the Kaaba. The mosque can accommodate one million Muslims at a time.

The Kaaba is also called the house of God or the house of Allah in Arabic.

The Kaaba is not considered holy but it serves as the point where every Muslim faces during prayer. During the Hajj, Muslims also walk around the Kaaba in a counter-clockwise direction.

The Kaaba was built a long time ago but the Kaaba in its current state was built in H.E. 1039² (2161 B.E.) during the government of Usman of Turkey. It is a square building without windows. It has just one door. It is 15.25 meters high, about 10 meters wide and about 12 meters long.

The Kaaba is covered with a black silk and gold curtain known as the kiswah. Originally the Kaaba was not covered. It was first covered in H.E. 220. In H.E. 10 (1132 B.E.), the prophet Mohammed led 100,000 Muslims from the Saudi Arabian Peninsula on a Hajj to this place. At the time, Mohammed covered the Kaaba with a cloth from Yemen.

On the southeastern corner of the Kaaba is the Black Stone. As pilgrims walk around the Kaaba, they point to the stone on each pass.

The Black Stone is called al-Hajr al-Aswad in Arabic. Muslims do not consider the Black Stone a holy object. A well-known hadith records that, when Calip Uma ibn al-Khattab (580-644) came to kiss the Stone, he said in front of everyone assembled there: “No doubt, I know that you are a stone and can neither harm anyone nor benefit anyone...”³

Currently, the Kaaba is under the care of the Saudi Arabian government. The Saudi Arabian government also makes it easier for Muslims to go there for the Hajj. The Saudi Arabian government had a cloth made of black velvet and embroidered with Arabic letters in gold thread and used it to cover the Kaaba. Most people believe the Kaaba to be a holy stone worshipped by Muslims. In fact, the Kaaba serves only as the center for conducting Islamic rites.

Each year Muslims gather in Mecca in the millions. The Hajj takes place in the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar. This is a period between the end of November and December.

¹ Hajj is the pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

² H.E. means Hijra Era according to Islam calendar; B.E. 2553 corresponds with H.E. 1431

³ Abdulrah Laorman.

Besides Mecca City which serves as the religious center of Islam, there is also the Organization of the Islamic Conference or OIC which serves to further unify Muslims worldwide.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference or OIC is an international organization whose members come from fifty-six countries with a total population of 1.2 billion. These countries are located in the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Latin America. The official languages used are Arabic, English, and French. The overall objective of the organization is to promote Muslim solidarity in regards to economic, social, and political affairs.

The formation of the OIC happened shortly after the 1967 Arab-Israel War where Masjid Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem, which is considered the third most holy site in Islam, had been seized. Leaders of Muslim nations met in Rabat, Morocco, to found the OIC on September 25, 2512 B.E.

On March 19, 2513 B.E., the first meeting of Islamic Conference of Foreign Minister (ICFM) was held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. This meeting served to establish a permanent secretariat in Jeddha headed by the organization's secretary general, and to agree on the Charter of the Organization in February 2515 B.E..

Under the Charter, the Organization aims to:

- 1) Enhance and consolidate the bonds of fraternity and solidarity among the Member States; increase cooperation in social, economic, cultural, scientific, and political areas; respect the right of self-determination and non-interference in domestic affairs and to respect sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of each Member State.
- 2) Exert efforts to protect Islamic sacred sites, support the fight of the Palestinians, restore sovereignty and the release of occupied territory.
- 3) Protect and defend the true image of Islam; to combat defamation of Islam and encourage dialogue among civilizations and religions.⁴

The Islamic Summit, composed of Kings and Heads of State and Government of Member States, is the supreme authority of the Organization. It convenes once every three years. However, the meeting of Islamic Conference of Foreign Minister occurs every year.

Details of the teachings and origin of different religions will be given in the course DF 404 Religious Studies. DF 404 provides fundamental knowledge about religion, the beliefs subscribed by primitive cultures, and the different religions in the world today.

⁴ <http://www.the-thainews.com>. **Islamic Meeting II**, B.E. 2552

9.3 The Global Center of Buddhism

9.3.1 The Global Center of Buddhism during the Lord Buddha's Time

During the Lord Buddha's time, the city of Savatthi was used as the center of Buddhism. Our Lord Buddha had spent twenty-five out of forty-five years in the city of Savatthi. He stayed at Jetavana Temple for nineteen years and at Pubbaram Temple for six years.⁵ The other twenty years were the years that our Lord Buddha started establishing Buddhism. He spent one or two years here and there but did not spend any length of time in one place.

The reason for this might be that initially Buddhism was known only to a small number of people; therefore, our Lord Buddha and His disciples had to go from place to place in order to teach as many people as possible in the different cities. Those who had heard the Dhamma lectures began to spread the news about the happening of Buddhism until more and more people came to know about it.

There were two reasons why the Lord Buddha chose Savatthi as the center of Buddhism.

The first reason was there were two major lay supporters in Savatthi, namely, Anathapindika and Visakha. They donated a huge sum of money to build the Jetavana Temple and the Pubbaram Temple respectively. Anathapindika paid for the land of the temple by lining the land with coins. This was an indication of how important the Jetavana Temple would come to be. During the time of our Lord Gautama Buddha, no one had put in as much effort as Anathapindika in building a Buddhist temple.

The second reason was there had been a change in politics. Initially, our Lord Buddha started to establish Buddhism in the city of Rajagarh where King Bimbisara was the main lay devotee. However, after King Bimbisara was killed by his son Ajatasattu, Rajagarh began to weaken and this had an effect on the stability of Buddhism.

The king who ruled Savatthi in the kingdom of Kosala was Pasendikosala. Kosala was a powerful kingdom in those days and its king was a firm believer of Buddhism. He was the same age as our Lord Buddha. The political situation in Savatthi was far superior to that in Rajagarh; therefore, it created a better environment for the growth of Buddhism. Although later on King Ajatasattu became a Buddhist but the change in government could not support Buddhism in the same way as when Bimbisara was king. It was for this reason that Savatthi became the center of Buddhism during the last twenty-five years of our Lord Buddha's time.

⁵ *Dhammapadaṭṭhakāthā Aṭṭhakathā-khuddaka-nikāya Gāthā-Dhammapada.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 40, p. 10

The center of Buddhism serves to create unity among the Buddhist Communities because it is a place where Buddhists can meet together regularly and communication can take place effectively. Our Lord Buddha used Savatthi as the center for sending information to other regions. The center of Buddhism plays a crucial role in preserving and perpetuating the Dhamma-Discipline up until the present time.

During the first part of Buddhism, the Lord Buddha and the venerable monks had spread the teachings widely and to different regions. Many men undertook ordination and were sent to teach the Dhamma in different localities. Meanwhile, our Lord Buddha continued to teach the Dhamma and decree new disciplinary rules. Had it not been for the center of Buddhism which sent up-to-date information out to the venerable monks teaching in different locations, many problems would have occurred. Remember that in those days, there were no televisions, mobile phones or the Internet. When the venerable monks were not informed of new disciplinary rules, they could easily transgress the Dhamma-Vinaya. More importantly, if monks do not adhere to the same disciplinary rules, division can occur.

The fact that Jetavana Temple served as the center of Buddhism allowed the venerable monks to know that the Lord Buddha was there. Upon their return to see the Lord Buddha, they could learn from their fellow monks what new disciplinary rules had been decreed and what new Dhamma lectures the Lord Buddha had given, etc. During the Lord Buddha's time, the monks would come to see the Lord Buddha once a year sometime after the Rains-Retreat. "This tradition was practiced by the monks in those days."⁶ At times, different temples might not have enough resident monks to perform Upasampada (the ordination of monks) and they had to come to Savatthi in order to request for additional monks. Upon their return to Jetavana Temple, they also had the opportunity to get updated on new information.

The fact that the Jetavana Temple could serve as the center of Buddhism and accommodate visiting monks made it possible for effective communication among the venerable monks to take place. Phra Dabbamallaputra was responsible for finding suitable accommodation for all the monks and this is how he did it.

He arranged for the monks who were well-versed in the Suttas to stay together so that they could recite the Suttas together. He arranged for the monks who were well-versed in the Vinaya to stay together so that they could analyze the Vinaya together. He arranged for the monks who were well-versed in the Abhidhamma to stay together so that they could converse about the Abhidhamma together. He arranged for the monks who had attained the Jhanas to stay together so that they could practice meditation together. He arranged for the monks who were fond of a variety of worldly talk to stay together.⁷

⁶ *Vinayapiṭaka Mahāvagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 2, no. 228, p. 449

⁷ *Vinayapiṭaka Mahāvagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 3, no. 541, p. 448

Such arrangement of accommodation fostered better communication, created unity and harmony among the monks to a very high degree. Better communication together with the center of Buddhism has made it possible for all the 84,000 Dhamma topics to be passed on to us in their entirety. This practice serves as the prototype for creating unity among the Buddhist Communities worldwide.

The temple that serves as the center of Buddhism occurs in every Buddha Eon and the manner in which the land of the temple is purchased is also quite similar.

During the time of the Lord Vipassi Buddha, a wealthy man called Punabbasumitta commissioned a craftsman to fashion gold bricks for him. Each gold brick was 50 centimeters long, 25 centimeters wide and 1 inch thick. He purchased the land for the temple by lining it with the gold bricks.

During the time of the Lord Sikhi Buddha, a wealthy man called Sirivadta purchased the land for the temple by lining it with gold rods.

During the time of the Lord Vessabhu Buddha, a wealthy man called Sotathiya commissioned a craftsman to fashion elephant footprints made of gold and purchased the land for the temple by lining it with these gold footprints.

During the time of the Lord Kakusandha Buddha, a wealthy man called Accuta purchased the land for the temple by lining it with gold bricks.

During the time of the Lord Konagamana Buddha, a wealthy man called Ugga commissioned a craftsman to fashion gold turtles and he purchased the land for the temple by lining it with these gold turtles.

During the time of the Lord Kassapa Buddha, a wealthy man called Sumana purchased the land for the temple by lining it with gold bouillons.⁸

Besides using a particular temple as the center of Buddhism, it was written in the Tripitaka that every Lord Buddha holds a meeting with His Perfected Disciples where He gives the Ovadapatimokkha Lecture. The Ovadapatimokkha Lecture explains the ideals, the principles, and the methods of perpetuating Buddhism. For example, during the time of the Lord Vipassi Buddha, the first such meeting was attended by 60,800,000 Arahats.⁹

If lay devotees were added to this large number of Arahats, the temple used as the center of Buddhism during the time of the Lord Vipassi Buddha had to be enormous. It has been the Buddhist practice to build the center of Buddhism in every Buddha Eon.

⁸ *Sumamgalavilāsinī Aṭṭhakathā-dīgha-nikāya Mahāvagga. Aṭṭhakathā-mahāpadāna Sutta.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 13, p. 89-90

⁹ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddaka-nikāya Apadāna Part II.* Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 33, p. 351

It can also be noted that wealthy men in the past donated a huge sum of money in order to build the temple which served as the center of Buddhism. They were willing to purchase the land for the temple by lining it with valuable coins or gold. They realized that money and gold could not bring about true happiness but donating it toward the building of a temple could earn them a vast amount of Ariya wealth which could follow them into future existences. Moreover, the temples they built were the places where lay devotees could come to make merit. The merit accumulated by the temple builder and the lay devotees allowed them to attain the Internal Triple Gem which is the source of true peace and happiness.

9.3.2 The Center of Buddhism in the Present Days

Now that Buddhism has all but disappeared from India, which country should then be the center of Buddhism? Thai people can be proud of the fact that the international Buddhist Community has agreed that Thailand should now be the center of Buddhism. This agreement came out of the meeting attended by leaders in Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism from forty-one countries around the world. This meeting took place during the celebration of Visakha Puja Day from May 18 to May 20, 2548 B.E., at the meeting hall in Phutthamonthon and at the United Nations building in Thailand. There were altogether 1,600 Participants, and the participants were monks as well as lay people. Participants left the meeting with seven agendas, one of them was the celebration of Visakha Puja Day at the center of Buddhism namely, Phutthamonthon, Thailand.¹⁰

1) Celebrating Visakha Puja Day at Phutthamonthon

Phutthamonthon is located at 25/25 Moo 6, Uttayarn Road, Salaya Tambon, Phutthamonthon Amphoe, Nakorn Pathom Province. It covers an area of 2,500 rais. Construction commenced during the time when Field Marshall P. Phibunsongkram was Prime Minister. In 2495 B.E., the Field Marshall wanted to have a memorial built to honor the Lord Buddha on the auspicious occasion where Buddhism turned 2,500 years old on Visakha Puja Day in 2500 B.E.

On July 29, 2498 B.E., the government requested His Majesty the king to perform the construction commencement ceremony. The construction of Phutthamonthon began in 2500 B.E. It was finished in 2525 B.E. when General Prem Tinsulanon was Prime Minister.

¹⁰ “International Buddhist Society named Buddhamonthon as the World Buddhist Center,” **ASTV Manager Newspaper Online**, B.E. 2548

Phutthamonthon is divided into four areas: Buildings: 94 rais, roads and walk-paths: 244 rais, ponds and canals: 600 rais, lawns and gardens: 1,562 rais. There are three important buildings and one important Buddha Statue.

- (1) The Buddha Statue is called *Phra Si Sakkaya Thotsaphonlayan Prathan Phutthamonthon Suthat*. It is located at the center of Phutthamonthon. The Buddha Statue stands 15.875 meters tall. The Statue was started in 2523 B.E. and was completed in 2525 B.E.
- (2) The meeting hall was completed in 2529 B.E. It is used for Buddhist meetings.
- (3) Mahasirinath Library is a Buddhist library and can accommodate 500 people. It holds about 500,000 books. The construction cost of about 250 million bahts was donated by Wat Paknam and the Society of Luang Pu Wat Paknam's Followers.
- (4) The marble Vihara is the place where the entire Buddhist canon engraved on 1,418 marble stelae are housed. Its architecture is Thai-style. In the middle of the structure there is a Cetiya with nine spires. There are paintings which depict the Lord Buddha's history all around the Vihara. Construction began in 2532 B.E., and finished in 2541 B.E. The construction cost of about 200 million bahts was donated by Wat Paknam and the Society of Luang Pu Wat Paknam's Followers.

Around the statue are sites memorializing the Four Holy Places in Buddhism. There are gardens which memorialize important places during the Lord Buddha's time. These include Veluvana Garden or the bamboo garden, Ambavana Garden or the mango grove, Latthivana Garden or the palm grove, etc.

Activities at Phutthamonthon are arranged during important Buddhist days such as Magha Puja Day, Visakha Puja Day, Asalha Puja Day. People can come to offer alms to venerable monks and listen to Dhamma lectures on Saturdays and Sundays. There is the annual ordination of novice monks during the hot season. Seminars for the Sangha are held here regularly. There is the bestowal of ceremonial fans to venerable monks by the Supreme Patriarch. There is the celebration of Visakha Puja Day arranged by Mahachulalongkorn College. Etc.

2) Wat Phra Dhammakaya: The Meeting Place of the Buddhist Communities Worldwide

Being the center of Buddhism is a big job and requires the help of different organizations. The fact that Wat Phra Dhammakaya is a large temple with the most number of monks, Upasaks, and Upasikas, it has played its part by hosting Sangha meetings as well as hosting hundreds of thousands of Buddhists worldwide on important religious occasions.

(1) Wat Phra Dhammakaya's History: Wat Phra Dhammakaya was founded on February 20, 2513 B.E. It is part of the Thai Sangha Mahanikaya. The temple is located in Klong Sarm Tambon, Klong Luang Amphoe, Patumthani Province. The current Abbot is the Most Venerable Phrathepyanmahamuni.

Wat Phra Dhammakaya covers an area of around 2,500 rai. It is about the same size as Phutthamonthon. The different important sites inside Wat Phra Dhammakaya have been built to accommodate a million Buddhists at a time and they include:

The International Dhammakaya Hall: Buddhists gather here to chant, practice meditation, and listen to Dhamma lectures every Sunday and on important days in Buddhism. It can accommodate about 300,000 people.

The Great Dhammakaya Cetiya: It is the Triple Gem Cetiya and consists of three parts: Buddharatana, Dhammaratana, and Sangharatana.¹¹ The Buddharatana part consists of one million personal Dhammakaya Images, 300,000 on the outside and 700,000 on the inside. At the base of each Dhammakaya Image is inscribed the name of the donator. The Sangharatana part can seat 10,000 monks. It is where the venerable monks sit during important Buddhist ceremonies. The Great Dhammakaya Cetiya was built to last at least 1,000 years.

The Grand Meditation Stadium: It was built around the Great Dhammakaya Cetiya like a huge square, each side of the square is one kilometer long. This area can accommodate about one million Buddhists at a time. It is a place where all four Buddhist Communities can come together as one.

Other important buildings include The Great Memorial of Phramonkolthepmuni or Luang Pu Wat Paknam, the discoverer of Vijja Dhammakaya. Inside the great memorial is enshrined Luang Pu's solid gold Image weighing one ton; the Great Memorial of Khun Yai Acariya Maharatana Upasika Chandra Khonnokyoong, the founder of Wat Phra Dhammakaya; the 60th Anniversary of Phrarajbhavanavisudh Building where high level of Samatha and Vipassana meditation is practiced. Etc.

(2) DMC Television Station: DMC comes from Dhammakaya Media Channel. It is a television station which gives morality education via satellite to viewers worldwide. It broadcasts its programs 24 hours a day. It teaches the Dhamma which provides knowledge about the reality of life to its viewers of every age, gender, race, and creed. It aims to teach its viewers about the reality of life, the importance of merit accumulation, and the practice of meditation for inner peace, the basis for lasting world peace.

(3) Propagating Buddhism and Uniting the Buddhist Communities Worldwide
The Most Venerable Phrathepyanmahamuni, the Abbot of Wat Phra Dhammakaya, is determined to perpetuate Luang Pu Wat Paknam's aspiration to propagate Buddhism worldwide. To achieve this lofty goal, there are important factors that must be in place.

¹¹ **Ratana** means gems or precious stones.

- 1) Building a place which can accommodate the Buddhist Communities worldwide during important Buddhist activities.
- 2) Propagating the Dhamma through quality personnel and modern technology.

In terms of human resources, Wat Phra Dhammakaya has been actively selecting and training quality personnel. It is for this reason that the temple has the highest number of quality monks, novice monks, Upasakas, and Upasikas in Thailand. Modern technology used in propagating the Dhamma includes computer, the Internet, animation, telecommunication such as DMC television station, etc.

Construction work in the temple is near completion but construction work does not stop the different buildings from being used regularly for important activities and ceremonies over the years.

Important activities take place at Wat Phra Dhammakaya all year long and every year. There have been many creative projects over the years but here only four will be mentioned.

- The offering of alms to the Sangha from every temple in Thailand: This great merit-making activity takes place on Earth Day which corresponds to April 22 of every year. Recipients may come from 10,000, 20,000 or 30,000 temples. Each year the event is participated by 200,000 to 300,000 venerable monks and lay people. The Most Venerable Phrathepyanmahamuni intends to continue the activity so that at least one million participants at a time can gather together.
- The offering of food to 500,000 monks nationwide is held in every province several times a year. Each food-offering is attended by 1,000 or 10,000 monks. This activity aims to revive traditional Buddhist cultures as well as sending the donated food to the four southern provinces which have been impacted by terrorist acts.
- The Path of Progress Project is an exam based on knowledge about morality. It takes place every year and is participated by no less than ten million people including monks, the general public, government officials, soldiers, policemen, and students nationwide.
- The V-Stars Project aims to revive world morality by creating model students in morality. Initially it was participated by 5,000 schools nationwide. The latest number of participating students is 500,000. A gathering of V-Stars at the grounds of Wat Phra Dhammakaya has already taken place four times so far. The first time 200,000 students participated. The second time, there were 500,000 students.

The third gathering was on July 11, 2552 B.E., and 500,000 students participated. The Most Venerable Phrathepyanmahamuni, the Abbot of Wat Phra Dhammakaya wanted the fourth gathering of V-Stars to take place near the end of December, 2552 B.E.

The V-Stars Project aims to teach and train students as leaders of good deeds by practicing the Lord Buddha's Teachings starting with basic morality based on respect, discipline, and patience.

When a large number of Buddhist adults and children from all over the world can come together to perform good deeds and learn about the Lord Buddha's Teachings, it creates unity among the Buddhist Communities. They can think, say, and act in the same direction. When these positive images are broadcasted worldwide, they will inspire Buddhists everywhere to help perpetuate Buddhism, hence, to help create lasting world peace.



Assignments:

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

Chapter 10

Conclusion

The Conclusion of the Fundamental Knowledge of Buddhism

Concepts:

This course is about the fundamental knowledge of Buddhism. It is the knowledge about the Triple Gem, the core of Buddhism. It is the knowledge which every human being must have. The Triple Gem is our refuge and can lead each of us out of suffering. The one thing every human being has in common is the Internal Triple Gem. The Internal Triple Gem can be attained through meditation practice where our mind is kept quiet and still in a relaxed and comfortable manner at the seventh base or the center of our body.

Through this course, the student should be able to assess his life in the following four aspects. The student should be able to review his entire life, change the way he spends his time if it has not been done correctly in the past, learn more about the truth of life, and prove the Dhamma to himself by practicing meditation.

Objective:

To give the student an overview of this course so that he can easily apply it to his daily life.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

Through this course the student has learnt the various aspects about the truth of life especially in regards to the Triple Gem, the core of Buddhism. The Triple Gem is humanity's highest refuge. This is the knowledge which every human being must have, for it is through the Triple Gem that human beings can find the way out of suffering. And it is through the attainment of the Internal Triple Gem that human beings can gain the maximum benefit. The Internal Triple Gem can be attained through meditation practice. It can be attained by resting our mind quietly, softly, and comfortably at the seventh base which is the center of our body.

And now we would like to encourage each student to consider the following:

1) Take the Time to Review Your Entire Life

Think back to the time you were born up until now and consider all the things that you have done. Now apply the Lord Buddha's Teachings to check and see if the things in your life are wrong or right, if they are merit or demerit, if they are things that ought or ought not to be done, etc.

Having considered these things, make a decision about how you will live your life from now on. Consider the things that you want to do and the things you want to abstain from for the sake of your own good and happiness in this and future existences. Consider the ultimate benefit of attaining the Internal Triple Gem for the removal of defilements and the attainment of Nibbana.

2) Change the Way You Spend Your Time

If in considering the way you have spent your time in the past you find it wanting, it is now time to make the necessary changes. Perhaps in the past you were too busy with the demand of daily life to take the time to learn about the truth of life which is the most important knowledge in life. You have learnt by now how the knowledge about the truth of life allows each one of us to live out our life in such a way as to reach the true objective of our humanity. Therefore, it is up to you to plan your time accordingly from now on.

Do realize that life is very short. The longest lifespan we can hope for is perhaps 100 years. However, the average lifespan today is 75 years which correspond to 27,375 days or 3,910 weeks. If we spend on average seven hours sleeping, we will have already spent a total of 1,117 weeks. It means that we have only 2,793 weeks left in our life. It is perhaps time to ask yourself how much time you have already spent on nonsensical things and how much time is left in your life. You also need to ask yourself if you can live to be 75 years old.

Soon enough it will be time for death and rebirth. How you want your rebirth to be like is entirely up to you. You know by now how our overall Kamma determines the code of our rebirth.

3) Learn More about the Truth of Life

Some of you may think that this course is enough to serve you for life in the round of rebirth. However, nothing can be further from the truth.

This course merely gives you a rough map of life in the round of rebirth, there is still so much more that needs to be learnt. Most importantly, life in the round of rebirth can be compared to life in a country which is filled with landmines. If we do not study the map of the country in detail, chances are that we will make mistakes and step on the mine. When we consider the fact that even Niyata-Bodhisattas¹ have stepped on landmines countless times, who are we to be complacent?

We can never afford to be complacent. On the contrary, we must exercise heedfulness at all times. Where the Dhamma is concerned, the more we know the better it will be for us. This is because knowledge in the Dhamma can guarantee a life of safety.

4) Prove the Dhamma to Yourself by Practicing Meditation

What you have learnt so far is only theoretical knowledge. The next step requires you to put it into practice. It means applying the Dhamma principles in your daily life and practicing meditation in order to attain the Internal Triple Gem.

It is pointless to believe or disbelieve what you have learnt. The Dhamma gives us the greatest benefit when we can put it into practice. It is in the same way that after learning how to swim from a book, we must get into a pool and put what we have learnt into practice. Otherwise, we will never be able to swim.

¹ **Niyata-Bodhisattas** are Bodhisattas who have already received the Buddha-Forecast that they will definitely become self-enlightened as a Lord Buddha at the stated time in the future.

We cannot find our way out of suffering by reading, thinking, or memorizing. We can however find our way out of suffering by practicing meditation earnestly. Once we can practice it to the point where we can see the truth for our self, then we can be like the important lay supporter Anathapindika, who after having attained the Fruit of Sotapanna, said that he no longer has to rely on other people when it comes to the Lord Buddha's Teachings.²



Assignments:

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook.

² *Vinayapiṭaka Cullavagga*. Part II, Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 9, no. 251, p. 126